



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Warm and wet

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Independent
Fantasy Football
WIN A TRIP TO THE
1998 WORLD CUP FINAL

Young Tory, not so fogey, samples the damp delights of carnival



Tory leader William Hague and his fiancée Ffion Jenkins drink coconut milk during their visit to the Notting Hill carnival. Photograph: Kieran Doherty

Ian Burrell

Rain dampened the start of the Notting Hill Carnival, where William Hague, the Tory leader, and his fiancée Ffion Jenkins joined the crowds yesterday – and washed out many people's

Bank Holiday Monday. Mr Hague, who is said to be trying to throw off his "old fogey" image, said, "This is the biggest cultural event of the nation."

But storms created chaos on the roads for thousands of motorists who were only too well

aware of the other vehicles around them as flooding contributed to jams on many of the roads to the coasts. Surface water in the West Country, created hazardous conditions while fog and mist across Lincolnshire led to reduced visibility.

A severe weather warning was issued for East Anglia where half a month's rainfall fell in six hours, flooding several roads in the area.

The RAC reported flooding in Wiltshire with the A354 in Newton, the A3102 in West-

brook and the B3803 in Bexhill.

Water on the M25 near Denham was three to four inches deep while the M40 between Bicester and Banbury and junctions 1A of the M40 also saw delays because of flooding.

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The firearms lobby will today launch legal action against the Government, claiming compensation, which could run into hundreds of millions of pounds, for the ban on the ownership of handguns.

"If the Government chooses to deprive an entire industry of its property – namely its ability to trade and the fruits of that trade – and individuals of the right to enjoy a leisure activity, it should provide proper compensation. In respect of economic interests and loss of amenity, it has provided absolutely nothing," said Mr Whitten.

A legal team, representing all sectors of the firearms industry, will lodge the application today, claiming compensation for loss of business and amenities.

The move does not attempt to challenge the Firearms Act, which was enacted after the Dunblane school massacre in March last year, when 16 children and their teacher were killed. However, the group has described the Government's compensation package, passed by Parliament in June this year, as "woefully inadequate and lacking in consistency".

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The gun lobby has claimed that the 1997 amendments to the Firearms Act will not have an effect on gun-related crime. It has pointed to the example of murderers and robbers who were rarely registered with gun clubs, claiming that sportsmen would suffer because of the legislation.

Although the prohibition itself was not being challenged, a fair balance must be struck between the public interest in a ban and the protection of the fundamental rights of individuals and businesses, he said. There were no domestic remedies available, he added.

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Shooters to sue over gun ban

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'Guardian' journalist helped Ghanaian pursue libel action

Steve Boggan

A senior *Guardian* executive wrote the cheques which paid for a libel action against *The Independent* brought by the former head of security for an African military regime, it was confirmed yesterday. More than £300,000 was paid into Victoria Brittain's bank account, allegedly from Ghanaian and Libyan sources, to fund the lawsuit, which *The Independent* has been fighting for four years.

Ms Brittain, the *Guardian's* deputy foreign editor, used the money to pay the legal bills for Kojo Isikata, the former head of internal security in Ghana, one of her closest friends for almost 20 years. She suggested Mr Isikata should sue *The Independent* – and instructed him to Bindman & Partners libel lawyers – following the publication of an article which referred to the murder of three Ghanian high court judges in 1982. When legal bills were presented, sources say, she wrote personal cheques to cover them.

What she did not know, however, was that her bank details had been secretly given to Libyan contacts. She believed all the money arriving in her account was from Mr Isikata but most of it is reported to have originated from Libya. The *Guardian* said she would not be disciplined for her role.

Ms Brittain's involvement in the lawsuit was revealed two days ago when David Shayler, a

former MI5 officer, told the *Mail on Sunday* that the payments into her bank account had triggered a surveillance and bugging operation in 1994 because intelligence operatives wrongly believed it was part of a Libyan money-laundering operation. When they realised the operation was simply intended to bankroll a legal action, the surveillance was halted.

In a statement from Bindman & Partners issued on Sunday, Ms Brittain said she never knowingly received any money from Libyan sources. A

Guardian spokeswoman confirmed last night that Ms Brittain's bank statements did not identify the source of payments into her account. She said it was not in dispute, however, that money had been paid into and out of her account to fund the libel action.

Had her bank statements been more comprehensive, Mr Shayler told *The Independent* yesterday, they would have shown that five of seven payments from September 1993 to February 1995 had Libyan connections.

They comprise three transfers

of £34,890 each from the Libyan

Interest Section account at the Libyan Arab Foreign Bank on 15 December 1994, 1 January 1995 and 2 February 1995; and two more – one for £60,000 and another for £50,000 – are understood to originate from two Credit Lyonnais accounts held by Khalifa Ahmed Bazeby, the former head of the Libyan interest section at the Saudi Arabian embassy in London.

Other payments which did not appear to originate from Mr Isikata include one for £48,989 from Kojo Amoo-Gottfried, the former Ghanaian ambassador to Peking in November 1994, and £10,000 from a Yousef Ibrahim in December 1994.

She has satisfied Alan Rusbridger, her editor, that she was acting "innocently" in a personal capacity and so will not face disciplinary action. She has allowed Mr Isikata to pay sums of money into her account for many years. It is understood he had a child at public school in England and did not want to pay fees directly to the school.

The use of her account for the libel action is being seen at *The Guardian* as an extension of that arrangement. A spokeswoman at the newspaper refused to comment on the appropriateness of one of its senior executives becoming involved in a libel action against another publication.

Mr Isikata sued the publishers of *The Independent* after a report in 1992 about a public inquiry into the execution of the judges. The Court of Appeal upheld *The Independent's* argument that a fair and accurate report of the inquiry's proceedings was covered by qualified privilege. Last month, Mr Isikata was refused leave to appeal against this decision at the House of Lords. His solicitors intend to proceed to trial with the argument that *The Independent's* publication of the report was "malicious".

Ms Brittain is seeking legal advice over the possibility of suing M15. She believes the intelligence service has been bugged and surveilled operations in

and surveillance operations in

the culture of heavy drinking, bureaucracy and low morale within M15. Among those who had been spied on by the security service was Mr Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio.

"I believe I have done nothing wrong in highlighting what was going on," he said yesterday. "These things should not have been happening."

"If the Government decides to make an example of me, then I will have to take legal advice to assess my position. I hope they just accept that I was right to highlight what M15 were doing and use that information to shake it up."

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news

significant shorts

Air-filled waders keep fisherman afloat 19 hours

A man whose boat overturned during a fishing trip was rescued after spending more than 19 hours in the water – using his air-filled waders to help him float. But his son, who was with him on the boat, was yesterday still missing.

John Brodie, 43, of Rosedale, Lancashire, was picked up by the Royal Air Force Valley rescue helicopter one and a half miles off Llandudno, North Wales, after being spotted by a member of the public who notified the coastguard at Holyhead and Llandudno. Mr Brodie, who was fishing with his son, Charles, 23, said their cabin cruiser, *Chaz's Dream*, overturned on Sunday afternoon. He had spent more than 19 hours in the water.

Rescue teams were last night intensifying the search for his son, concentrating on the area off Little Orme's Head, up to a half mile and a half miles offshore and up to the coastline. Jim Paton, District Controller at Holyhead Coastguard, said: "We are delighted to have found the father. He is a remarkably lucky man. The search will now continue for his son."

Thomas, 12, may have known killer

Detectives were yesterday investigating the possibility that schoolboy Thomas Marshall may have known his killer. Police said they were following "genuine lines of inquiry" and thought the key to the case might lie in or near Thomas's home village of Happisburgh, Norfolk. But a spokesman stressed that police were keeping an open mind about the killing – including the possibility that Thomas, 12, may have been abducted by a paedophile.

Thomas disappeared from his home at around 6pm on Thursday. His body was discovered 50 miles away in a picnic area off the A11 near Thetford a day later. He had been strangled. His mountain bike was found lying by a road at East Ruston, about four miles from his home. Thomas had told his parents, John and Carol, that he was going to visit a friend in Eccles. But they were told that he had never arrived. Detective Superintendent Les Parrett, who is leading the investigation, said officers were trying to locate as many of Thomas's friends and associates as possible. They were also considering the possibility that the killer had dumped Thomas's bike and taken his body to Thetford to lay a false trail.

Jackson's charity under scrutiny

Heal the World, the charity set up by superstar Michael Jackson (left), was under scrutiny yesterday after the Charity Commission found a "significant" amount of its United Kingdom income went on administration. The singer's international charity was set up in 1992 in a with the aim of raising £60m in a year. In June this year Channel 5's *What's The Story* programme revealed that the charity had not made a single charitable donation in the past three years. Richard Fowler, president of Heal the World International, said then that the UK charity had been made semi-dormant to cut costs, but would soon be revived.

A Charity Commission spokeswoman confirmed that the accounts of the organisation had been studied and that contact would be made with Heal the World. "Some charities do have high start-up costs through the nature of what they do and obviously we have to make sure we have to make sure that money is being spent on the purpose that the charity was set up for," she said.

Wedding guests in E. coli outbreak

Health officials tackling an outbreak of *E. coli* food poisoning were yesterday trying to track down hundreds of guests at a wedding reception after discovering that many of them work in the catering industry. Birmingham's director of environmental services, Ian Coghill, said: "We know at least 30 of the guests at the wedding work in the food industry and we are worried about the potential for the infection to spread to others."

The source of the outbreak has been traced to a lamb dish served at the reception held at Swanshurst Girls School in the city earlier this month. Mr Coghill said that 600 people had been contacted since the outbreak began, but more than 1,400 are believed to have attended the wedding. Two of seven children affected by the potentially fatal bug after the wedding reception remain "stable" in Birmingham's Children's Hospital. The others have been released.

Over-60s stay with private health

The abolition of tax relief on private health insurance for the over-60s has not led to the mass exodus insurers predicted. Government sources said yesterday. Reports yesterday estimated as many as 100,000 people had given up their private medical cover since the Chancellor Gordon Brown announced the cuts in the July Budget. However, a Health Department spokesperson dismissed the figure as "fantasy".

The relief, granted at 23 per cent of the basic rate of tax, had cost the Treasury £140m a year, according to Mr Brown. The Conservatives claimed this saving would be wiped out as more elderly people gave up their premiums and opted to use the NHS. But the spokesperson said that the Chancellor would be pouring £1.2bn into the NHS over the coming year, adding that the Government had no indication that waiting lists had been affected by the Chancellor's move. A spokesperson for Bupa, the biggest health insurance company, commented that not as many patients as projected were dropping their cover. A spokesman for PPP Healthcare said that one in two people were expressing concern at the rise in premiums, but an exact figure had not been established at how many would give up.

Philip McNamara

Correction

The article headlined "Right, you lovely little man" in yesterday's *Independent* gave the impression the first incident described took place during the parachute selection course. The incident described actually occurred during a final exercise at Sandhurst. Dr Bellamy never trained with the Parachute Regiment.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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people



Admission of guilt: Suzanne Warburton and Paul Shearsmith (Photograph: Reuters)

Woman walks free after making false rape claim

A British mother-of-four escaped being jailed in Cyprus yesterday when a judge fined her £400 for falsely claiming that she had been raped.

Suzanne Warburton, 30, and her boyfriend, Paul Shearsmith, 26, who were fined the same amount, had been warned by the British High Commission in Cyprus that they could expect jail sentences.

The same judge, Michael Christodoulou, then fined three other British tourists almost the same amount for falsely reporting that they had lost a watch.

Outside the court, Ms Warburton showed no signs of stress and smiled and joked with her boyfriend as they waited to pay the fines. "It's a great relief to be going home," she said.

Only two weeks ago, the same district court at Larnaca sentenced a 22-year-old Irish woman, Annette Mangan, to four months in Nicosia central prison for making similar false charges of rape.

Judge Christodoulou told the couple, from Stockport, Greater Manchester, that their "fabricated claim was a serious offence and that an innocent man had his name smeared so they could try to claim insurance money."

The judge said there was a need for deterrent sentences in such cases, but added that he was taking into account their clean record and that their admission of lying to police had prevented an innocent man from being arrested.

Last Thursday, Warburton and her boyfriend went to police claiming she had been raped by the son of the hotel owner where they were staying just outside Ayia Napa.

Police became suspicious because the couple had taken so long to file the complaint, and had only done so just a few hours before their plane was due to leave Cyprus.

Yesterday, Judge Christodoulou said that bogus insurance claims by tourists on the island were out of control, with police receiving between 30 and 40 false claims per day.

Civil engineer Chris Barker, 30, from Sutton, Surrey, his girlfriend, Kirsty Sales, 24, a secretary from Wallington, Surrey, and their friend Margaret Fernandez, 30, from Middlesex, were fined £250 each for trying to claim insurance money for a stolen watch worth £1,000.

Barker said Miss Sales had retracted her verbal complaint five minutes after making it to police, but was forced to make a written statement. He claimed police were hostile, banging desks and chairs, and saying she would go to prison if they didn't confess to the false claim.

"It was a silly thing to do and petty, but you hear all the time that people get away with this. We were treated as if we'd killed someone," he said.

Ian Burrell

Lisa Potts makes her debut on the airwaves**Labour demands explanation from bank chief**

Labour last night demanded an explanation from the governor of the Bank of Scotland, Sir Bruce Paley, after anti-devolution campaigners claimed him as one of their supporters.

Last week, Sir Bruce publicly criticised plans to give the Scottish Parliament tax-raising powers. Yesterday the Think Twice campaign listed him, along with Sir Donald Mackay, the former chairman of Scottish Enterprise, as a "known sceptic" on devolution.

A Labour Party spokesman said that Sir Bruce must "make his position clear".

"He must make clear whether or not he is in the ranks of Think Twice – or is he prepared to come out openly and say is very angry that the Think Twice campaign has tried to hijack him?" the spokesman asked.

Sir Bruce could only continue to speak on behalf of his bank and other businesses if he did so as an independent figure, he said.

Sir Bruce was not available for immediate comment yesterday, but Brian Monteith, co-ordinator of the Think Twice campaign, said the list had been issued purely as a guide that journalists might find useful.

"He has nothing to do with us," he said. "All we are doing is providing a list of names."

Fran Abrams

briefing

SOCIETY**The 1990s – a decade of poverty and upheaval**

Memories of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s are dominated by music and fashion, but the 1990s are summed up by unemployment and moral decline, a report claims today. The present decade is seen as the dreariest in living memory, characterised by lack of money, fear of job losses and the disintegration of the social fabric.

In contrast, people remember earlier decades as an exciting time of innovation, music, hippies, free love, space exploration, mini skirts and flared trousers.

Impressions of the 1980s include the "loadsamoney" economic boom and the political dominance of Margaret Thatcher, with fashion and music still high up on the list, according to the survey of 2,000 adults, by global investment managers Templeton.

A Templeton spokesman, Ken Nicholson, said it may be that bad memories faded with time, so the 90s would ultimately be remembered for more positive reasons. "Clearly it's the sounds and the visual images that dominate over time."

"The big question is, in 20 years, will we have forgotten the rise of the Internet, John Major, unemployment and the recession and simply remember Brit Pop and the Spice Girls?"

The findings emerged from a guide which the company compiled to track whether world events such as wars and the moon landing had any effect on the financial performance of investments.

"The conclusion was they didn't," said Mr Nicholson.

"Just as the global events of the past 40 years have faded in people's memories, they have also had little lasting impact on long-term investment values."

ENVIRONMENT**Climate change threatens bears**

Thousands of polar bear cubs could be killed by a dramatic temperature rise in the Arctic, which is melting their dens and destroying their food, environmentalists warn today.

A North Pole expedition by environmentalist group Greenpeace revealed an "alarming" rate of global warming which could threaten the existence of the polar bear and other unique Arctic wildlife.

Expedition leader Steve Sawyer told PA News from the group's boat on the Arctic Ocean: "There is so little ice here we cannot tell the difference between the ocean and the North Sea. It is very alarming."

The early Spring thaw has meant polar bear dens have collapsed, potentially smothering cubs or exposing them to harsh Arctic weather too soon. The reduction in ice affects the entire ecosystem, from seals to fish, which is the bears' food."

Dr Vera Alexander, an expert on ice-edge ecology at the University of Alaska, involved in the expedition, said: "The continued decline of sea ice will affect the production of algae, which lives beneath the ice and forms the very base of the Arctic food chain."

"Without the algae, there would be no possibility of a food chain as we know it, affecting fish, seals and polar bears."

Greenpeace is calling for a ban to expanding oil industry in the Arctic regions, which it claims is damaging the environment.

**NHS****Casualty staff at risk of violence**

Hospital casualty staff face the threat of violence on a daily basis. A five-hour snapshot of seven of the UK's leading accident and emergency departments carried out for the Press Association, found that verbal and physical abuse of medical staff was widespread. The findings have been given to Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health.

The findings come as Britain's biggest union, Unison, prepares to issue safety guidelines to health workers in a bid to curb the rising tide of workplace violence. New figures, due to be released by the union later this week, show nursing staff and social care workers are most likely to experience violence at work.

Of the 579 new criminal injury compensation claims dealt with by the union over the last six months, 165 were made by nurses following attacks at work and 157 from social care workers.

Mr Dobson has promised to take a tough line on patients who abuse A&E staff.

MOTORING**Driving a hard bargain**

Bargain hunters who spent the bank holiday looking for a used car may well end up disappointed, according to a report. For one in four buyers, their cherished motor is not what they expected, says a survey by Yorkshire Bank.

The holiday weekend is a peak period for second-hand buyers, but too many have their priorities wrong, it adds. Some 56 per cent are influenced by whether the car has good bodywork, as opposed to 21 per cent who put the engine at the top of their checklist.

Only 12 per cent of buyers say they would commission a vehicle inspection report from an independent assessor, and 46 per cent rely on a second opinion from a friend or relative.

Yorkshire Bank spokeswoman Helen Kettenborough, said: "Cars represent significant spend and so the survey findings are quite alarming. It seems that many buyers make very little attempt to check out the car and its history and as a result, run the risk of ending up with a vehicle which doesn't match their expectations."

One in eight owners give their car a name, according to the bank. The survey showed most cars are "female", with names such as Betsy, Bessie and Lucy topping the list of favourites.

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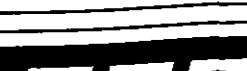
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Topping the fast food charts

Ham and pineapple pizzas are now the freezer meal of choice for millions

Louise Jury

Frozen supermarket pizzas have turned into Britain's convenience food of choice: in the past five years alone sales have doubled to make the easy television dinner into a £241m-a-year business.

In Italy, they are freshly baked works of culinary art. In Britain, we seem to prefer them cling-wrapped from the freezer. A report published yesterday revealed Britons are eating more than 66,000 tons of frozen pizza a year.

Datamonitor, an industry analyst, said: "Family meals are out, snack culture is in, and pizzas are providing to be a choice of snack or dinner."

Strong advertising, changing lifestyles and innovation had contributed to the giant growth in business, a spokesman from the company said.

San Marco is the most popular brand, followed by McCain, Goodfellow's and Chicago Town. But supermarket own brands account for 40 per cent of the market.

At shops in the Asda chain, for instance, they will compile you a customised takeaway pizza while you wait. Pineapple and ham is by far and away the winning combination. Anchovies are largely shunned. The stores try to be flexible. "If someone asked for marshmallows, we'd go and get some from the shop," a spokeswoman said.

She estimated that they sold more than 40 million customised pizzas a year and double that in frozen ones. "They are incredibly popular," she said.

Some ready-made pizzas are very good, according to *The Independent's* food writer Annie Bell. Others are "abominations,



Slice of life: In the last five years, sales of frozen pizzas have doubled to £241m - Britons now eat more than 66,000 tons of them a year

Photograph: John Lawrence

Created by the Neapolitans and better for you than fish and chips

How they are made

The Americans like to claim the pizza for their own. But it is with Italy that the dish is most often associated.

Though using bread as a plate has been commonplace for centuries, it seems it was the Neapolitans who topped a disc of bread with cheese and tomato and created the pizza as we know it.

They were assisted by an

abundance of large, sweet, red tomatoes grown from seeds brought from Peru by two Jesuit priests. And though pineapples are a favourite ingredient these days, purists claim the toppings in an authentic pizza stem only from what is available fresh in Italy - such as mozzarella, anchovies and tuna.

A proper Italian pizza has a crust made of flour and yeast with no fat. The dough should be

kneaded by hand or mixers that do not overheat it and punched, again by hand, into a disc no larger than a dinner plate. The base is baked directly on the base of a wood-fired oven heated at temperatures up to 800F. It certainly should not be microwaved.

All ingredients should be fresh and the mozzarella should be worked by hand. Cutting it with a knife may leave a metallic taste.

pure stodge and very nasty. The main thing is that we still treat pizzas as though the whole point is the topping, whereas the crust is what matters," she said.

The perfect pizza should be baked in a proper wood-fired bread oven or on stones. "It will

have no flavour at all if it's just a manufactured bread base baked in an ordinary oven," Ms Bell said. "A few of the supermarkets are catching on to this. Some are even importing their crusts from Italy now."

Ann Taruschi, who runs the

renowned Walnut Tree Inn restaurant in Abergavenny, Gwent, with her Italian husband Franco, was amazed and saddened that anyone wanted to buy pizza.

"It's just so easy to make," she said. "To make bread is a

How healthy are they?

Food critics may have their culinary objections, but pizza is not necessarily a bad addition to the family diet.

Too much cheese will pile on the calories and the cholesterol. But a topping of vegetables or prawns or tuna would prove a relatively healthy option. Pizza bases contain carbohydrate, but a thin-crust would be acceptable. Deep-pan bases contain more fat. Pizzas fare well compared with kebabs, fish and chips and burgers, all of which are high in fat, salt and sugar content.

I've never bought a supermarket pizza and I don't think anyone has re-heated me one."

Although people are buying cookery books in their millions (and he is about to add to the pile with one of his own), Mr Hopkinson believes that they could be coffee table accessories. "I don't think people cook from them much. I think we're losing our way deeply in terms of cooking," he said.

Yet he does recognise the value of shop-bought fast food. "I go to Marks and Spencer and buy the chicken tikka masala because it's delicious. I think their prawn cocktail is quite good. I like them because they're well made and I'm sure their pizza is probably quite delicious, too. But it doesn't bear any relationship to the one you eat in a cafe in Naples."

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"It is certainly not a covert attempt to smooth the path to legislation. Neither is it a device designed to bolster a law that may be perceived as failing to best serve those it is meant to assist."

She added: "Clearly there are a range of views on the misuse of drugs and we intend to consult widely with those who have experience in the area."

Viscountess Runciman said that one task would be to examine what decriminalisation and legalisation of drugs would mean.

Chunnel helps Garden of England blossom again



Thriving: The adonis blue butterfly and late spider orchid

Photographs: Stephen Davis/English Nature

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

After rearranging a sizeable part of the Kent coast, Eurotunnel is making its peace with Mother Nature and winning plaudits. This week the company that moved enough sand and stone to fill 10 Wembley stadiums will get an award for its efforts on behalf of a rare orchid and an iridescent blue butterfly.

The escarpment overlooking the tunnel terminal near Folkestone is one of the largest remaining areas of unimproved, not ploughed or chemically treated - chalk downland in Kent. In 1990 it was in a poor state. Without animals to graze it, coarse grasses were rampant and motorcycle scramblers and off-road vehicles were cutting through the thin soil.

Some 666 acres of the escarpment is designated as a site of special scientific interest and of that 153 acres is owned by Eurotunnel Developments - land the company acquired before building the tunnel but not needed for its operations. To ease its conscience per-

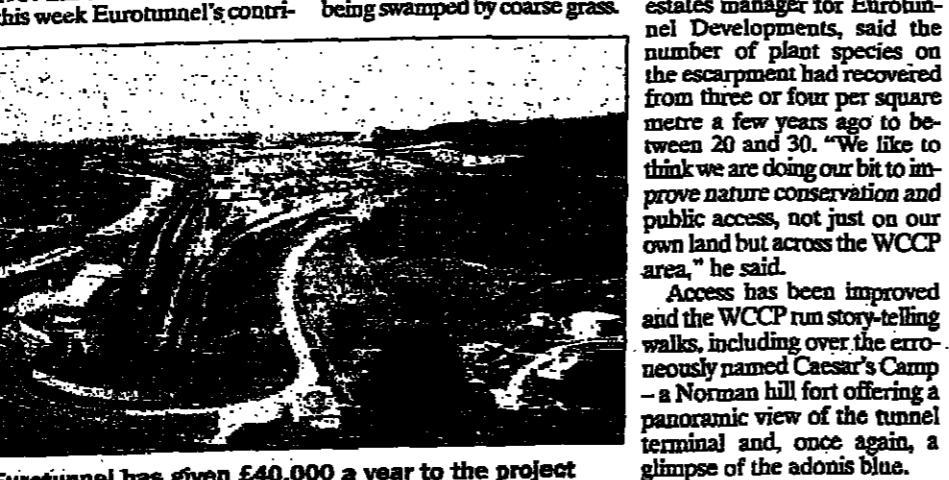
haps and to foster goodwill, Eurotunnel has taken a leading role in funding the White Cliffs Countryside Project. The £40,000 it has put in each year has helped pull in other partners from the private and public sector and a £240,000 contribution from the European Regional Development Fund.

The transformation that has been brought about by the project on the escarpment since 1989 has been remarkable and this week Eurotunnel's contri-

bution will be recognised by the 1997 SSSI Award from English Nature.

Sensitive management, getting the land grazed by cattle and easing out the scramblers, has enabled rare plants to flourish, notably the late spider orchid. There are probably only about 300 of this particular pink and brown orchid in the country and between 20 and 30 per cent of them are on the Eurotunnel land. Before the project began they were in danger of

being swamped by coarse grass.



Eurotunnel has given £40,000 a year to the project

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HIV test clue to Gulf veterans' illness

Ian Burrell

Sick Gulf veterans are increasingly concerned that the cause of their illness may be related to a substance used in experimental inoculations designed to give protection against HIV.

The veterans fear the synthetic compound, traced in former soldiers by American scientists, was given on the orders of defence chiefs to stimulate their immune system to fight off possible chemical and biological attacks.

But instead it may have wreaked havoc with their immune systems, leaving them suffering from the debilitating conditions they are now reporting.

Tests done in American laboratories found the compound squalene to be as prevalent in the blood of sick Gulf veterans as it is among patients involved in HIV-related experiments, where the compound is part of their medication.

Tony Flint, of the National



Danger zone: Many who fought in the Gulf conflict fell ill later

Gulf Veterans and Families Association, said: "Presumably it was intended to boost the immune system but because we had so many drugs pumped into us all at once it seems to have done the complete opposite and broken it all down."

He said he was anxious for British veterans to be subjected to similar blood tests as the Americans.

Before the start of the war, Gulf troops were given a series of vaccinations to protect them from yellow fever, tetanus, typhoid, cholera, hepatitis B, hepatitis A, rabies, anthrax and bubonic plague.

Some soldiers say they received up to 18 injections.

Veterans claim that they still have not been told the contents of all the vaccinations they were given.

They have now written to John Reid, the armed forces minister, to ask whether any personnel were administered squalene.

In its synthetic form, squalene is used as an adjuvant, stimulating the body's immune system when mixed with other vaccines, in order to make those vaccines more effective.

It is not approved for use on humans except in the most experimental official tests designed to find cures for viruses such as HIV or herpes.

One senior American government official told the *Washington Times* magazine this month: "I can't tell you why [squalene] is there, but there is. And I can tell you this too, the sicker the individual the higher the level of antibodies for this stuff."

One of the researchers involved in the tests told the magazine: "We found soldiers who never left the United States but who got shots who are sick, and they have squalene in their systems."

"We found people who served overseas in various parts of the desert that are sick who have squalene and we found people who served in the desert but were civilians who never got these shots who are not sick and who do not have squalene."

Pamela Asa, a Tennessee-based immunologist who specialises in auto-immune diseases, has found that some adjuvants can have the side-effect of imbalancing the body's immune system.

She has carried out tests on more than 150 sick veterans, 95 per cent of whom showed positive for synthetic squalene antibodies, which were not present in members of the public.

"Why they have squalene when they are not supposed to have been given it I cannot say," she said. "They need some explanation."

The US Defense Department has now admitted that it has squalene in its experimental arsenal, but has denied that it was used in the Gulf.

The vaccine used in HIV experiments consists of HIV envelope — a genetically engineered piece of HIV DNA — along with an adjuvant of squalene and a non-ionic detergent.

In separate tests on Gulf veterans, Garth and Nancy Nicolson, California-based immunologists, have found traces of the HIV envelope.

The envelope does not place the veterans at risk of contracting Aids.

Gulf troops were also exposed to organophosphate pesticide sprays used in an attempt to protect them from desert pests. There are also disputed claims that some soldiers came into contact with chemical weapons, possibly after Allied bombing of Iraqi munitions dumps.

This month Paul Carr, 30, who had been a prominent campaigner on Gulf illness, became the 134th known British veteran to have died since the conflict.



Charles Haughey: Faces charges after misleading a judicial inquiry into his finances

Photograph: Photocall Ireland

The kept politician: how a judge called Haughey a liar and solved Ireland's great political mystery

Alan Murdoch
Dublin

Charles Haughey may face prosecution for misleading a judicial inquiry at which he denied secretly receiving £1.3m from a supermarket magnate while he was Irish premier between 1987 and 1991.

In its damning report yesterday the Dublin tribunal investigating payments to politicians branded him a liar. The Irish Director of Public Prosecutions will be sent documents on Mr Haughey's finances gathered by the inquiry into payments by Ben Dunne when he was head of the Dunnes Stores.

Judge Brian McCracken, inquiry chairman, delivered a blunt verdict on Mr Haughey's conduct. He said that by first avoiding co-operating at all with the tribunal while denying he had received the Dunne cash, Mr Haughey's attitude "might amount to an offence" under a 1921 law governing evi-

dence to tribunals. "The tribunal has been unable to accept much of the evidence of Mr Charles Haughey," it said.

The 112-page report rejects the claims by Mr Haughey, who was Taoiseach four times between 1979 and 1992, that he was unaware that cash was being channelled to him from secret accounts in the Cayman Islands through his friend, the late Des Traynor, a prominent Dublin businessman. Mr Haughey said

Traynor had full responsibility for dealing with his personal finances.

In an invitation to tax authorities to investigate the offshore cash movements, Judge McCracken said the tribunal believed the former premier "deliberately shrouded the gifts in secrecy to ensure that the Revenue authorities

would never know of the gifts". It was "unacceptable" that a minister and Taoiseach should be supported in his lifestyle by such personal gifts. The tribunal verdict, confirming critics' views that Haughey was indeed "a kept politician", lifts the lid on the oldest mystery in Irish politics, namely: how Mr Haughey

to the Isle of Man, and London to the Cayman Islands. Confronted with these facts, Mr Haughey admitted he lied to the tribunal and his lawyers.

The report also opens the way to the former transport minister Michael Lowry facing serious charges over tax evasion and breaching the terms of a tax

amnesty by failing, as required in law, to disclose all payments received.

The report said: "It is an appalling situation that a government minister and chairman of a parliamentary party can be seen to be consistently benefiting from the black economy from shortly after the time he was first elected Dail Eireann."

The amnesty breach could lead to a jail term of up to eight years and fines of up to twice the amount of tax evaded. Senior Dail members yes-

terday called on Mr Lowry to consider his future as a member of the Dail.

Mr Lowry supplies refrigeration services to Dunnes Stores, which effectively held complete control of his firm, with payments devised so as "to assist him in evading tax".

Dunnes paid for a lavish extension to Mr Lowry's country home in Tipperary. His earlier non-disclosure of his full finances to his party leader saw Mr Lowry forced to resign last November from cabinet and the Fine Gael party.

The Taoiseach Bertie Ahern said the cabinet will on Thursday consider setting up another tribunal to examine other gifts to politicians outside the scope of the McCracken investigation. A permanent ethics commission is also likely.

Apparently signalling an imminent tax crackdown, he said he expected state agencies to "take all necessary action" arising from the report.

MP in suicide row breaks silence

Suspended Labour MP Tommy Graham yesterday broke his silence to appeal to the media to leave him alone. The MP for West Renfrewshire has not been seen in public since the suicide of fellow Labour MP Gordon McMaster last month.

In comments relayed by his solicitor, Mr Graham denied that he was planning to stage a "tell-all" press conference, and said he was considering legal action against some newspapers over "derogatory comments which were completely unfounded".

Mr Graham was last week suspended as a Labour MP along with two other local party figures, and a far-reaching investigation was ordered into three local Labour parties, after the suicide of Mr McMaster brought to a head years of infighting and intrigue in party circles in Renfrewshire.

Weekend speculation that Mr Graham was considering a press conference to put his side of the events is thought to have caused consternation within Labour, at a time when the party believes it has weathered the worst of the Renfrewshire storm and can start concentrating on the devolution campaign.

But Mr Graham said yesterday that he would not be making any statement until the full inquiry into Renfrewshire politics had been completed by Labour's Chief Whip, Nick Brown. He urged others who wished to come forward and make a statement to do so then.

His solicitor, Ian Robertson, said the MP "absolutely denied" all the allegations against him, and welcomed the opportunity the inquiry would give him to clear his name. He also said Mr Graham - whose face appears on "fairy anti-devolution posters" - wanted to give full support to the pro-devolution campaign.

"He would like the media to concentrate on the very important issues raised as he supports the 'Yes', 'Yes' vote and backs the party 100 per cent," Mr Robertson said.

Criticising media coverage of the affair, Mr Robertson went on: "Tommy feels that the derogatory tone of certain press articles was completely unnecessary and not worthy of the serious exposure given. To that end he is taking advice from senior counsel with a view to raising proceedings for defamation against the newspapers concerned."

Mr Robertson said he hoped the media would respect the MP's wishes to enable him and his family resume "some form of normality". "He would like to thank all those who have expressed their support to him," he said.

'He deliberately shrouded the £1.3m gifts in secrecy to ensure that the Revenue would never find out'

Devolution leaflet floods post in Wales

Tony Heath

The Government is spending £160,000 on the production and distribution of a leaflet setting out the main points of proposals for a Welsh assembly to Wales's 1.2 million households.

Ron Davies, the Secretary of State for Wales, will this morning visit Flint in North Wales to meet postal workers preparing for the first day's delivery. He said:

"When I put the plans for Welsh devolution before the House of Commons I promised that people would be provided with an easily understood version of the White Paper. The leaflet fulfils that promise and will enable voters to study the issues for themselves and make an informed choice when voting on 18 September."

Welsh Office minister Peter Hain is this morning visiting Flint in North Wales to meet postal workers preparing for the first day's delivery. He said:

"When I put the plans for Welsh devolution before the House of Commons I promised that people would be provided with an easily understood version of the White Paper. The leaflet fulfils that promise and will enable voters to study the issues for themselves and make an informed choice when voting on 18 September."

The leaflet is being distributed by Royal Mail's door-to-door service. It provides neutral information in line with government guidelines. No government money has been given

to either the "yes" or the "no" campaign.

There was no Bank Holiday respite from the devolution battle in Wales, with campaigners from both sides seeking out the estimated 30 per cent of "don't knows" who appear to hold the key to the 18 September referendum.

New avenues are being explored. A "Women Say Yes For Wales" group is to be launched at Whitchurch, Pembrokeshire, where a 10th-century reformer, Hywel Dda (Howell The Good), codified a

plurality of laws which enhanced women's rights.

The meeting agreed to try to persuade more women to vote yes by setting a target of 10 converts for each enthusiast. One forecast: "By coming back to the place where women's rights were born we can say that an assembly could bring genuine equality."

In Cardiff, 100 miles east, Mr Davies announced the publication

of eight minority languages.

Wales has a long-established

cosmopolitan population — in

Cardiff alone there are an estimated 5,000 Somalis and sizeable groups from the West Indies, Africa and the Far East.

"No" campaigners, who believe that the former mining valleys of the south are fertile grounds for their cause, were out in Pontypridd and Merthyr Tydfil. In Powys, where sheep outnumber people by ten to one, farmers eyed the proposed assembly with traditional caution.

They claimed that devolution would harm relations with Europe, but John Lloyd Jones, chairman of the National Farmers' Union in Wales, remained neutral: "I am not supporting either side."

The Confederation of British Industry in Wales is also leaving it to individual members to decide for themselves.

In the contest to win over celebrities, the "Yes" camp claimed rugby star Neil Jenkins to complement the capture of football international Ryan Giggs.

Cricketers have yet to be brought on side, but there is still much to play for before stumps are drawn in a little over three weeks' time.

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news

Tempers rise over volcano island

From Abrams
Political Correspondent
Phil Davison
Belham Bridge, Montserrat

that the Government's four-point plan is implemented without delay," he said.

A decision is also to be taken today on whether Ms Short's deputy, George Foulkes, will visit Montserrat. Mr Brandt has already suggested that he would not be welcome.

Last night Mr Foulkes refused suggestions that the situation had been exacerbated by his misunderstanding of a scientific report. It had been claimed that he had exaggerated the dangers of a "massively catastrophic explosive eruption", which were in fact negligible.

"I quoted directly from the report... which said that the scientists had previously regarded the possibility of a catastrophic eruption as negligible, but could not now rule it out," he wrote.

The Soufrière Hills volcano staged its biggest recent eruption a week yesterday, sending red ash, rock and gas into a valley less than two miles from an inhabited area. British scientists said there could be worse eruptions in the next few days, advised people to wear hard hats and warned them to be ready to "make an orderly exit" from danger zones.

Despite the warnings, only a handful of Montserratians left on a British-organised "voluntary repatriation" ferry to the nearby island of Antigua yesterday. Only a few dozen of the 4,000 remaining islanders – from an original population of 11,000 – have left since the evacuation began on Saturday.

Mr Brandt said a new housing project backed by Jamaica "shamed the Mother Country".

Britain had frozen its own emergency housing programme along with other projects, he said, despite pledges that those who chose to stay would be looked after.

"I have the impression Britain wants us all to leave, and to close the island down," Mr Brandt told *The Independent*.

Test for Robin Cook's ethical policy, page 11
Letters, page 13

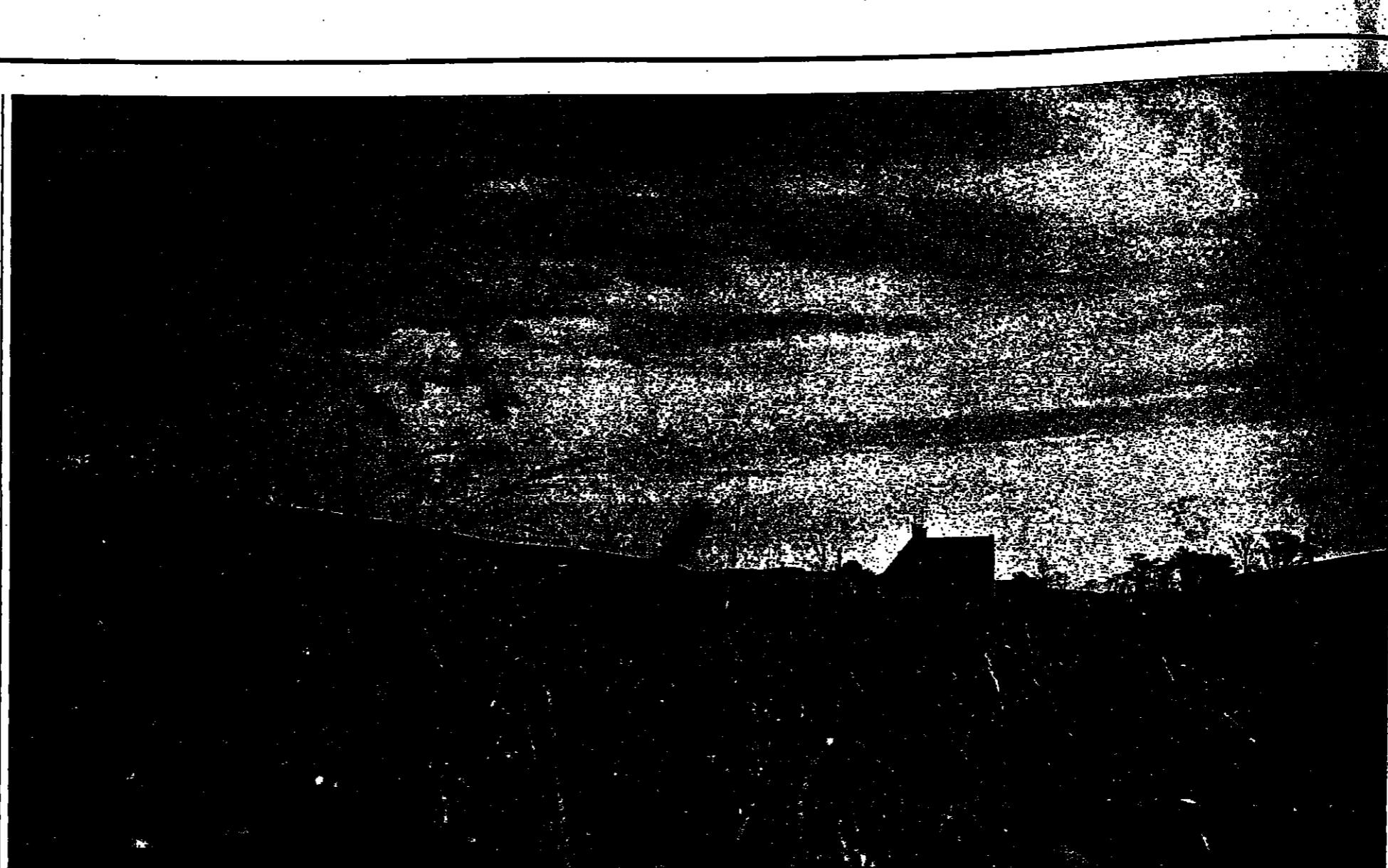
Ministry of Defence, Treasury and Bank of England, will meet for the first time today. It will discuss resettlement packages for the islanders both in the region and in Britain, the development of infrastructure in the north of the island for those residents who choose to stay and assistance to the nearby island of Antigua, to which 3,000 Montserratians have fled.

Last night Downing Street issued a statement from Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary. "Our assistance strategy needs to be delivered speedily and efficiently. That requires co-operation across Whitehall. The new committee will ensure

National Union of Journalists (NUJ) believes that the practice is on the increase even though most cases are thrown out of court.

Last week a cameraman from the production company Undercurrent was arrested with a group of protesters who had occupied the offices of Rank Leisure to protest at the company's plans to build an Oasis holiday centre in the Lympne Forest in Kent.

"First they tried to arrest me



Hideaway: Designed as a command post, the site includes 26 acres, a dummy lodge, the 9,000 sq ft bunker, and lots of barbed wire fencing. Photographs: Colin McPherson

Still worried about nuclear oblivion? MoD bunker for sale: £100,000, pleasant location



Restricted entry: The main 328ft tunnel slopes gently from the 'lodge' to the bunker

Stephen Goodwin
Heritage Correspondent

Paranoiacs who believe that the likelihood of nuclear oblivion persists despite the end of the Cold War have only a few more days to get in a bid for one of the most bomb-proof properties ever to come on the market.

The Ministry of Defence is selling a 25-room underground bunker set in 26 acres of hilltop overlooking the Aberdeenshire coast. Built in 1952 and fenced in with barbed wire, it appears to have been intended for use as a command post in the event of a nuclear war.

With an inscrutability worthy of the Cold War, the MoD will say only that it was "an emergency communications centre". However, the 328ft-inclined tunnel that leads into the hillside from a dummy lodge before reaching the main entrance

the facility suggests a pretty serious emergency was being catered for.

The 9,000sq ft bunker has bedrooms marked for all three services, dining rooms, a kitchen and a huge two-storey operations room. The surface "lodge" has been given a rural appearance.

Stone-built, it has a slate roof and full-length veranda. However, the chain-link fence topped with barbed wire rather spoils the disguise.

David MacLeod, of Ryden International Property Consultants, who is handling the sale, expects offers to exceed £100,000 although he concedes that the bunker is a bit of an unknown quality. He expects a closing date for bids to be set in about 10 days.

"We have had several people indicate they are going to bid but with a thing like this you are never sure how it is going to go," he said.

The site is above the

former fishing village of Inverbervie, now a commuter dormitory for Aberdeen. The most valuable part of the property is probably the 26-acres of farmland and a radio mast leased to Aberdeenshire Council also brings in £5,000 a year.

While it is thought that planning permission could be secured to turn the dummy lodge into a real home, living in the bunker itself would be impractical. Nor is consent likely for any more housing on the land. Storage and a tourist attraction are among uses being considered by potential purchasers.

Visitors have been struck by how cold and airless the bunker is. A sign points to an "emergency exit" although if the subterranean command post had ever been used in earnest it is hard to imagine anyone wanting to make a dash for the nuclear wasteland above.

'Our assistance strategy for Montserrat needs to be delivered speedily'

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Journalists fear police bid to black out green protesters

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

Journalists, photographers and cameramen believe that the police have adopted aggressive tactics with members of the media to stop them covering environmental protests.

A series of arrests of cameramen and photographers has prevented images of demonstrators being arrested getting to newspapers and broadcasters this year. The

on suspicion of burglary," Roddy Mansfield said last week. "When I showed them my NUJ card they took it off me and asked me to quote my PIN number. Because I could only quote two of the numbers while being held by two burly officers they then arrested me on suspicion of forging the press card."

"The plan was to sell the footage of these hyped-up tactical support group officers coming through the windows to arrest these women protesters."

Most notorious was the case of Nick Cobbing, the only photographer to get into the trees at the Manchester Airport protest site. The rest of the press

was kept in a pen close to the site and could not get evidence."

Undercurrent Productions, which makes programmes for Channel 4, has conducted its own survey of cameramen and journalists who cover protests and believes that 15 have been arrested this year in the course of doing their job.

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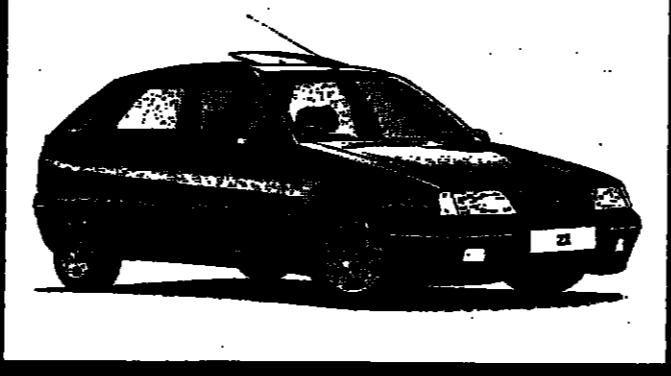
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international

China speeds up justice and doubles execution rate

Teresa Poole
Peking

China's anti-crime crackdown has led to a doubling in the number of reported executions. Punishment has in some cases been meted out so swiftly that defendants were shot within days of being arrested, and the type of crimes which have warranted the death penalty included VAT receipt theft, stealing a large haul of ballpoint pens and badminton rackets, and cattle rustling.

The figures for 1996 have been compiled by Amnesty International, which every year collates reports of death sentences and confirmed executions in the Chinese newspapers and other public sources. This represents only a proportion of the actual executions—the real figure being a state secret—but gives a reliable guide to trends in the Chinese judicial system.

For 1996, the human rights group recorded more than 6,100 death sentences and 4,367 confirmed executions. This compares with 3,110 and 2,190 respectively for 1995. Last year's gruesome tally produced the highest figures recorded by Amnesty's research, which has been published since the early 1980s. The only comparable year was 1983 when an earlier anti-crime campaign similarly led to a wave of mass executions.

The sharp rise last year was clearly due to the "Yanda" (Strike Hard) campaign launched against China's rising crime rate in April 1996. By May hardly a week was going by without

reports of mass public sentencing rallies and mass executions somewhere in China. According to newspaper stories at the time about specific cases, Chinese courts seemed to be processing cases at such a speed that any possibility of a meaningful or fair trial had been abandoned.

Last year the Chinese government was boasting to the international human rights community about improved safeguards for defendants in its judicial procedures.

According to Amnesty, the num-

bers of crimes which are punishable by death in China has spiralled over the last 10 years, particularly for non-violent crimes such as embezzlement, fraud and theft. On 25 June last year in Shanghai, Hou Zhijiang and Wei Xueming were executed for stealing ballpoint pens and badminton rackets valued at £4,400.

The next day, Chen Zhong and two other men were executed in Sichuan for attempting to steal valuable tax receipts from a tax office. Zhang Xizhong was executed in

Sichuan on 13 May for stealing 14 cattle.

The speed at which trials and executions have been carried out have been taking place in a judicial system which Amnesty describes as having an "alarming potential for miscarriages of justice". In Jilin province, three people were arrested for stealing from a car on 21 May, sentenced to death on 27 May, and executed on 31 May. There is no meaningful appeals process.

The bulge in reported executions

and death sentences lasted from May to September last year, according to Amnesty's figures. This included the anti-drugs crackdown in the run-up to Anti-Drugs Day on 26 June, with 447 confirmed executions in 1996 for drug trafficking or possession.

While foreigners are kept away from execution grounds, most Chinese people see executions as an accepted part of crime control. The "Strike Hard" campaign was widely welcomed—though it failed to solve the worsening crime situation.

Last Red jailed for killings at Wall

Final bid to bring East German Communist leadership to book

Agencies

Berlin - Egon Krenz, East Germany's last hardline Communist leader, was whisked off to jail yesterday after being sentenced to six and a half years for the deaths of people trying to escape over the Berlin Wall.

A Berlin court found Krenz, 60, guilty of manslaughter for four killings during the 1980s at the barrier that divided the city between 1961 and 1989. Even though Krenz did not pull the trigger, the court said the successor to Erich Honecker was none the less guilty because he shaped the shoot-to-kill orders that were carried out by border guards who shot at least 263 people. "I won't give up!" Krenz called when a supporter in the back of the courtroom shouted "All the best, Egon!"

There was a gasp in the courtroom from a large group of old-guard Communist supporters when judge Josef Hoch

ordered Krenz detained immediately—unusual for a German court—because he said there was a danger he would try to flee.

Krenz, who had denounced the trial as "victors' justice", was taken to the adjoining Moabit prison, a mile west of where the Wall once stood.

Two other former members of East Germany's Politburo, Guenter Schabowski and Guenter Kleiber, were found guilty of manslaughter for three killings at the Wall. They received terms of three years but were set free until the verdicts became legally binding.

Both pushed their way through a crowd of journalists without comment. The trial, lasting one and a half years, was widely seen as the last major attempt by united Germany to bring East Berlin's Communist leadership to book.

Honecker, who ruled for 18 years before being toppled and



Long wait: A joint plaintiff at the trial, Hans Peter Eich (left), who was shot in 1961 while trying to escape, and Krenz (right), arriving at court

Photographs: AFP, Reuters

who would have celebrated his 85th birthday on yesterday, was released in the middle of his trial in 1993 because of ill-health. He died in 1994 in Chile.

Seven other senior East German figures, including the former defence minister Heinz Kessler, are serving three to six years after conviction last year on 15 counts of manslaughter

and attempted manslaughter between 1980 and 1989.

Krenz had expressed regret

during the trial for the deaths

at the Wall around Berlin and

at the border between the two

Germanys, which victims' groups say exceeded 900. But he insisted that, as a satellite state of the Soviet Union, East Germany had no control over its

borders. As a key part of his de

fence, Krenz presented a letter from the former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, who

criticised the court for holding

Krenz responsible for the Cold War killings.

But Mr Hoch said prosecu

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that the East Berlin Politburo

zealously turned broad guide

lines from Moscow into the grisly machinery of death. "The Politburo was responsible for border security," Mr Hoch said. "The guards were in fact given an ideological order to shoot.

The guards were taught that the refugees were enemies of peace and traitors to East Germany who should be destroyed."

Mr Hoch said that the East

Berlin regime, fully aware that more than 2 million people had fled the country between 1949 and 1961, had built the Wall and made it increasingly lethal be

cause they knew that it was the

only way to keep the rest from leaving.

Mr Hoch had planned to hold a news conference in a central Berlin hotel after the verdict.

His son Carsten read a state

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Cook joins Manila in child abuse mission

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Governments usually go to grand halls to sign bilateral agreements with overseas countries. This will not be the case when Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, visits the Philippines at the end of the week. Instead, he will find himself in a rundown building where abused and street children seek refuge.

Located in what used to be the heart of Manila's red-light district, the Bahay Tuhyan centre provides a modest refuge for children, many of whom have been sexually abused.

Britain has provided assistance to the centre and is planning to step up co-operation with the Philippines to prevent child abuse, especially sexual exploitation involving foreigners.

Although Britain is not considered to be the worst offender, its nationals have figured prominently in the few prosecutions brought by the Philippine authorities against child sex abusers. Of the four foreigners convicted of child sex crimes, two are British: Steven Mitchell was found guilty of sexual activity with small boys and Michael Clarke was convicted of organising sex tours.

Considerable publicity has also surrounded the arrest of Douglas Slade, who is charged with sexual offences against under-age children. He is one of 45 foreigners arrested since the Philippines decided to get tough on paedophiles.

Britain was among the first foreign countries to offer assistance. Last year, officers from Scotland Yard conducted a two-week course on the investigation of child-abuse cases. Following the course, the Philippines National Bureau of Investigation established the first national Anti-Child Abuse Division.

Now further assistance is being planned, with more ex-

Britain helps Philippines fight under-age sexual exploitation

ensive tie-up between the Philippine police and the Durham constabulary. Officers from Durham will be dispatched to conduct a four-week course for trainers, which will focus on detection techniques and the handling of victims.

The two countries will also step up co-operation in sharing intelligence on the movements and activities of known paedophiles and other serious criminals. With its European partners, Britain is helping to equip the government used to be content merely to deport them, even though some kept coming back.

Although Mr Cook will generate publicity for the fight against abuse, the British effort is little more than a drop in the ocean in a country where the United Nations fund Unicef estimates that 60,000 children work as prostitutes. Incest and abuse in the home are also rampant.

"We are questioning the effectiveness of the crackdown against child sex offenders," said Elizabeth Pucate, the spokeswoman for the Manila-based End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking (ECPAT) campaign. She says there has been some progress but there is also frustration over the lack of a more comprehensive effort to eradicate abuse by tackling the problem at a community level and providing rehabilitation for children involved in prostitution.

ECPAT says it has evidence that organisations in countries, including Britain, are still producing advertising material about child prostitution in Asia, describing the Philippines as a haven for child sex.

Adrian Thorpe, Britain's am-

bassador in Manila, says the British government is determined to play its role in helping to combat child abuse. He stresses that the Government "feels strongly that those who abuse children should be brought to justice".

This will be an uphill battle in the Philippines where there is a marked reluctance to tackle the domestic problems of child abuse. Although rape cases are prosecuted, other offences are generally unreported and not the subject of police investigation. As far as foreign paedophiles are concerned, the government used to be content merely to deport them, even though some kept coming back.

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the leader page

Let there be light on the murky world of MI5

Alegations of extensive MI5 bugging operations, made by the former agent David Shayler, are not only plausible, they are deeply worrying. They are of a piece with the story told by Peter Wright in *Spycatcher*, they cohere with the report by Cathy Masterson, an honourable woman to whom dumb loyalty to the Security Service counted for less than the need to tell the public the full extent of its surveillance, personal files and monitoring.

What Mr Shayler confirms is MI5's promiscuity. Its staff, along with home secretaries, prime ministers and other senior politicians, condoned operations that at best displayed a cavalier attitude to personal privacy and at worst illegally infringed basic civil liberties. In a sense, though, the most serious charge is that of downright inefficiency. During the Cold War there were plenty of real enemies at large. To waste scarce public resources listening, instead, to UB40 lyrics, let alone to Jack Straw's or Peter Mandelson's phone calls, is little short of criminal. Even the most rudimentary political intelligence would differentiate the groups of bearded teenagers and twentysomethings competing for office in the National Union of Students from out-and-out subversives. The absence of such judgement inevitably makes outsiders wonder about MI5's capacity, never mind its purpose.

As for Mr Mandelson – given the anti-Communist credentials of his grand-

father Herbert Morrison, it seems ludicrous to imagine him being recruited as a Soviet bloc "sleeper": the mere idea tells us all we need to know about the blind, right-wing biases of the organisation. If MI5's Cold War business was defending Britain, the country its staff had in their hearts and minds was not the one lived in by the rest of us – a pluralist place where a position in the National Council for Civil Liberties is hardly the mark of Cain.

But, of course, that is all in the past (except that the files are still extant, and inaccessible to the victims of MI5 paranoia). The Cold War is over. The student president of yesteryear is now Home Secretary and, as such, responsible for the Security Service. The suspected Soviet agent Mandelson now sits close to the spot in the Cabinet Office that co-ordinates flows of intelligence. And besides (it is claimed) MI5 is reformed, chastened, modernised, feminised. So should we just relax, treat these latest allegations like a piece of contemporary historical fiction and let the 2,000-strong organisation housed in splendour on Millbank go its own sweet way? Messrs Straw and Mandelson may, this week, face more urgent matters in the shape, for example, of bulging prisons and millennium domes, but sooner or later they will need to get their heads together on the subject of MI5's future. Although the commitment of Tony Blair's administration to open

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government is at best ambiguous, we have to hope that when they do review the Security Service they will do so openly. The public – the paymasters and alleged beneficiaries – have a right to know its powers, its costs, and above all what in the 21st century its purpose is supposed to be. They may well conclude that its historical *tear is over*.

Jack Straw's hand is going to be forced soon. Labour has promised to reform the Metropolitan Police, replacing the Home Secretary as police authority for London with a committee of magistrates and local authority nominees. What this will precipitate – surely

– is some fundamental review of the operations of Special Branch and those other units within Scotland Yard which do "national" work. There is clearly a world of difference between the skills and forces needed to police the streets of Brixton or Bexleyheath and those needed to protect diplomats, harry terrorists and do whatever else Special Branch should do. But where does the remit of Special Branch end and that of the Security Service begin, and how do both relate to the growing apparatus of national criminal intelligence gathering?

Only Pollyanna says everything in the post-Cold War garden is lovely, that

there is no longer a need for a domestic agency with the capacity to tap telephones, monitor the flow of funds, and follow papers and people. Counter-espionage is no ignoble function, and spying and other games of international relations will continue. It remains true that freedom requires vigilance (just so long as you keep in mind what freedom is for). But whether this work requires MI5, with its operational past and culture and vast superstructure, is a question the Conservative government consistently refused to ask. For all its talk about effectiveness in government, it spared security and policing from basic interrogation of costs and benefits.

MI5, meanwhile, has been allowed to get away with waffle about the drugs war and combating the IRA. So what is the Security Service doing now? Irish peace has (temporarily) broken out, especially since the Government believes that the solution to terrorism is not counter-terrorism, but a political readjustment in Ulster? Meanwhile MI5 may have something to bring to intelligence-gathering about international narcotics trafficking, but it is not the only agency with expertise. Ministers should be deeply suspicious of government agencies (Customs and Excise as well as MI5) that talk up drugs as a way of protecting bureaucratic structures.

The British love the secret world – witness the puny powers Parliament awarded its own intelligence committee,

and the pusillanimity of the Public Accounts Committee in failing to ask for proper studies of MI5's effectiveness (an international comparison with other counter-espionage agencies, say). Until 1989 that love-affair at least had some strategic justification. Now, however, it risks being pathological. It is time for an exact rendering of accounts for the security and counter-espionage apparatus. Perhaps Mr Straw's understandable desire to see the contents of MI5's files on him will speed the necessary review.

The wind of change

Brand names come and go in the brouhaha of economic change. It is the law of market life that companies die and new ones are born. But it is hard not to sound a note of regret at the demise of certain famous names. One is Boosey & Hawkes, the music company, which is now on the block. How many young instrumentalists have done their daily scales under that rubric? The name became virtually synonymous with amateur wind ensemble playing since, as well as publishing, the company used to be the great British instrument maker. It is the connection with the world of brass and silver bands that is especially going to be missed – no B&H, no *Brassed Off*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Minister denies volcano isle blunder

Sir: One of the increasing number of myths and misunderstandings that has arisen from the Montserrat crisis is that I am to blame for misreading the scientists' report ("Island declares 'war' on Britain", 25 August).

This is not so. I quoted directly from the report, a publicly available document, which said that the scientists had previously regarded the possibility of a cataclysmic eruption as negligible but could not now rule it out.

Their actual words were: "The remote possibility of the present crisis generating a massively cataclysmic explosive eruption has never been absolutely precluded, but the received wisdom was that it had a negligible probability of occurring. However, the recent increase in explosive activity is such, and the uncertainties attending any hypothesis about the volcano's capacity to go cataclysmic are so great, that the potential hazard cannot be taken to zero."

This is what I read over to the Press Association news agency, who reported it accurately. Dr Sparks is now suggesting I misquoted him. As you will see, I did not.

GEORGE FOULKE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State
Department for International
Development
London SW1

Sir: Clare Short's pronouncements on the government and people of Montserrat have been insulting and patronising ("Volcano island gives Short shrift", 25 August).

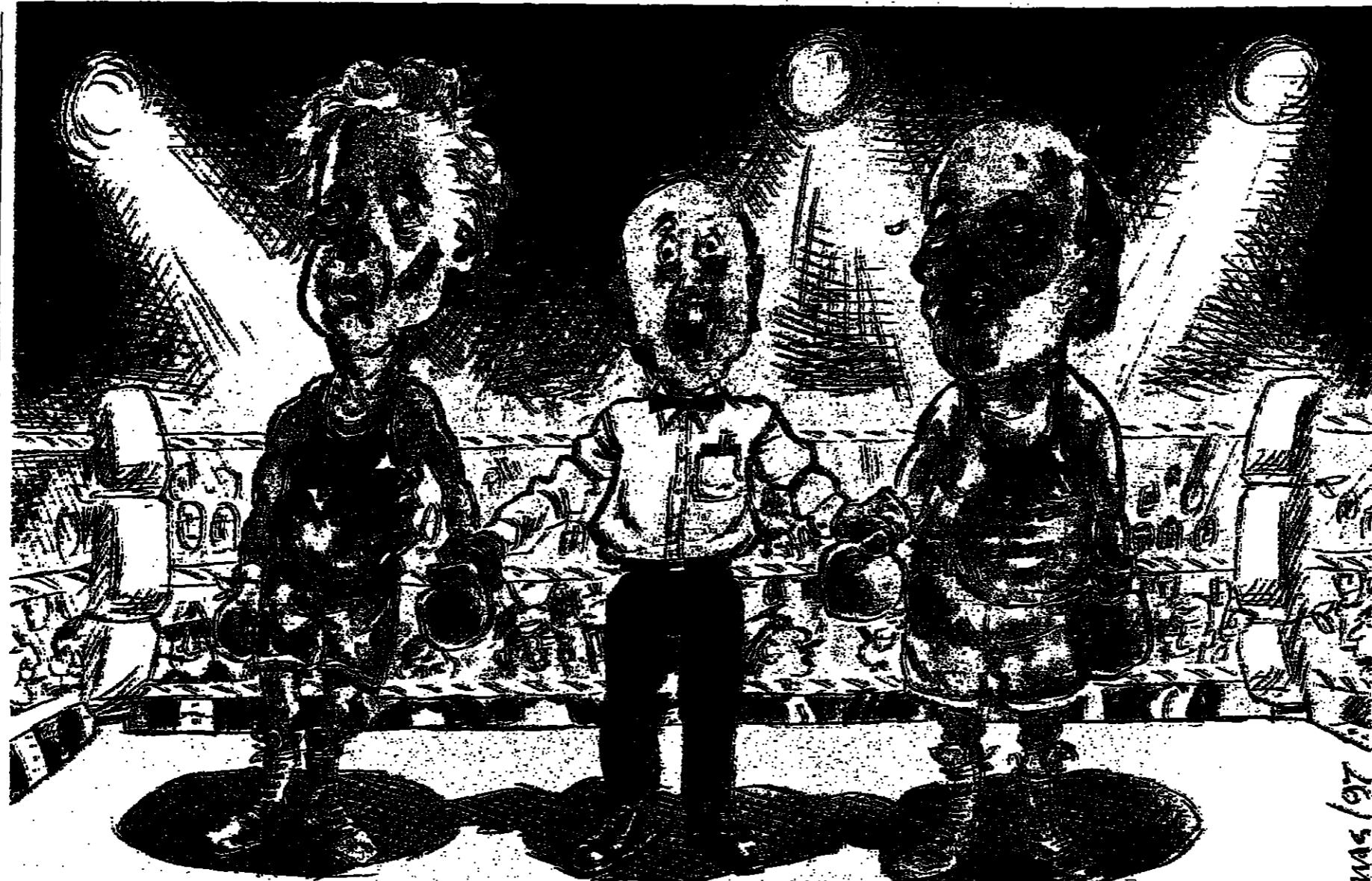
Those who know Montserratians know that they are a proud people, self-reliant and hard-working, proud that we are the descendants of British slavery, the product of British neglect, have by our own efforts built Montserrat into the thriving community it was before this terrible disaster. We withstand hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts. How dare she, who lives in a country where people complain if the temperature rises above 70 or there is a flake of snow, accuse Montserratians of whingeing?

Britain ruled over us for nearly 400 years. There was little on Montserrat to show for British rule before the advent of universal suffrage for the local people and the formation of a local government. There was no airport, no radio station, no proper electricity – nothing except a few wooden colonial buildings.

Montserrat is British, and we expect the same care and consideration that would be applied if there were a nuclear accident in Birmingham. I visited Montserrat in April this year and found living conditions worse than anything I have seen before. I saw no evidence of substantial funds being employed, no evidence of a cohesive plan for Montserrat.

Britain should declare a state of emergency and assume direct rule. It could then decide whether Montserrat could remain a viable entity with two-thirds of the island, with its most valuable amenities, uninhabitable. If the answer is yes, then the north of the island must be properly developed. The British Government would not be expected to meet all the cost, but they must provide the plan and the infrastructure, and leave the enterprising people to do the rest.

If it is decided that the island is not viable, then the situation must be properly explained to the people. All the inhabitants should



No GP deserves these patients

Sir: Jeremy Laurance ("Doctor, doctor, you're not on my wavelength", 20 August) suggests that the IQ of GPs needs to be downsized to improve the doctor-patient relationship. Far from it. The brightest and best are needed. The skill of the GP lies in picking out, in a seven-to-10-minute consultation, potentially serious pathology from the large amount of trivia that does present in the surgery.

Part of the answer lies in the better preparation of the would-be GP in medical school, where general practice has often been under-emphasised in favour of the more glamorous specialities. Part of the answer, I'm afraid, also lies with the patients. Because GPs are free and accessible 24 hours a day they are sometimes taken for granted.

I have been consulted for a broken fingernail, called out at 2am to settle a baby (because the father did not wish to disturb the baby's mother, who was asleep), called to help somebody get off the toilet, to prescribe medication for a patient's dog (the patient got free NHS prescriptions) and to put eye drops in at midnight – and asked to do one patient's VAT returns.

Add to this increasing violence towards GPs and their staff and tensions begin to develop in the doctor/patient relationship. Is it any wonder that when some of Britain's brightest have experiences like this, they stop and consider what they might expect to receive had they chosen the legal or business sector to train and work in?

Dr GARETH RICHARDS
Upper Layham, Suffolk

It's not cricket – it's the BBC

Sir: I was surprised and pleased to hear from Alastair Lenzner that the BBC devotes "countless hours of prime network time" to cricket coverage (letter, 23 August), since previously it seemed to be on only ludicrously late at night when most people had gone to bed.

I was also amazed to hear that there are "thousands of empty seats regularly seen around the televised games". The BBC televises only the one-day cup competitions and Test matches, which are almost always sold out. These empty seats must have coverage which I missed.

Sarcasm aside, I fear that if market forces ensure that the BBC cannot afford to show programmes (sports or otherwise) that are worth paying for, then it will end up showing programmes that are worth nothing.

RICHARD BARNES
Horsham, West Sussex

Tales of horror

Sir: May one suggest a few more plots to be included in the horror books for children ("Why young readers turn to little horrors", 25 August)? One would be of an old woman living in the woods who devours young people, while another concerns a wolf eating a grandmother and preying on her granddaughter.

Even better is one about a man with a whistle going round a town kidnapping all the children, but I dare say that would run into trouble with the police.

ROBERT VINCENT
Andover, Hampshire

given proper British passports which would allow them to come here, in the final analysis. And, yes, a proper assistance package must be worked out to allow the people to get established in their new environment.

The people on Montserrat have lost so much; the last thing they deserve is for someone who represents the "mother country" to hurl insults at them as if they were enemies rather than loyal citizens. Perhaps Ms Short should reconsider her position.

SAM GREENAWAY
London NW6
The writer is a former general secretary of Moppa, a London-based Montserratian organisation

Legal gag on green protests

Sir: There is a spectre haunting civil liberties in Britain. It goes by the name of SLAPPs – strategic lawsuits against public participation.

The BP action against

Greenpeace is but the latest example of this import from the US.

Increasingly, civil injunctions are being used or threatened against individuals and groups involved in legitimate environmental protest. Readers will be aware of the McLibel Two, but many others – local councillors, residents' groups, road protesters, land rights campaigners – are being intimidated to stop them exercising their democratic rights by the prospect of being banned from an area, silenced in public debate, bankrupted by lawyers' costs, and possibly imprisoned.

Often there is no prospect of such litigation coming to full trial.

The litigant company merely satisfies the court that it has a case to argue – nothing has to be proved – and that the balance of convenience justifies the injunction sought. Once the injunction is granted, the case is usually stayed.

The courts and the Legal Aid Board are failing to attribute sufficient weight to the right to express dissent or blow the whistle. Legal aid is rarely available to fight such cases, and the courts invariably favour a developer's commercial convenience over the fundamental rights of the citizen.

Incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights may improve matters, but until it does and the Courts see SLAPPs to be the abuse of the legal process that they are, our justice system will continue to succumb to the same forces that endanger our environment.

JOHN DUNKLEY
Solicitor
EarthRights
London NW1

The fate of Jeremy Thorpe

Sir: In her obituary of Henrik van den Berg, the Apartheid-state's police chief (21 August), Mary Braid writes: "He is believed to have been behind the downfall of the British Liberal Party leader Jeremy Thorpe."

That belief can persist only amongst extreme conspiracy theorists. Extensive police investigation leading to a well-

publicised trial, along with the much more limited Liberal Party inquiry into one aspect of the affair which I chaired, all pointed to actions by Jeremy Thorpe which led to his downfall, whilst exonerating him of the wilder accusations.

There remains, however, no doubt that Jeremy Thorpe's courage and foresight in campaigning against apartheid in the States when both Labour and Conservative front benches were unwilling to face up to what was happening in Southern Africa, must have annoyed van den Berg's masters.

MICHAEL STEED
Hon. Lecturer in Politics and International Relations
University of Kent at Canterbury
The writer was president of the Liberal Party, 1978/9

How thalidomide scandal broke

Sir: An important truth is omitted in the article "The truth about the greatest campaign ever" (25 August). Without the parliamentary campaign, the efforts of *The Sunday Times* on thalidomide would have sunk in a legal quagmire. Yet Parliament is not mentioned in Philip Knightley's report.

Harold Evans, the then editor of *The Sunday Times*, later wrote that legal threats from Distillers and the Attorney General were gagging the media. "For the first 23 days of the

campaign we had no coverage at all from the press."

The breakthrough came when I used parliamentary privilege to attack Distillers through questions and an early day motion. The legal gag was stripped away and the media began to report the attack.

The major parliamentary debate that followed was described by Evans as "the turning point".

The parliamentary activity transferred discussion of thalidomide from hushed tones in legal chambers to shouted headlines on front pages. It made that controversy a national issue. Once public opinion was aroused, victory was assured.

JACK ASHLEY
(Lord Ashley of Stoke)
House of Lords
London SW1

Long life down the centuries

Sir: Even a brief promenade around an old graveyard will demonstrate the accuracy of Terry Marshall's point (Letters: "A long life in Victorian times", 22 August). People who managed to survive birth and childhood seem to have developed a habit of not dying.

Thomas Hobbes, around the age of 75, said that his regular games of tennis and long, sweaty walks, always followed by a massage, would make him "live two or three years longer". Twelve years after that, he finished and

published his last book, and he eventually died of a stroke aged 91. (And the Countess of Desmond, we are told, only finally lost that habit of not dying when, at the age of 140, she fell out of an apple tree.)

But in their eyes old age approached faster. Montaigne complimented himself that though "well-stricken in years" his health is still "blithe and lusty", then immediately reminds himself that this cannot last: he is, after all, "engagé dans les avenues de la vieillesse" – his feet are already on the pathways of old age. And how old was he, exactly, at the time? Oh, he tells us that, in his forties.

Poor Montaigne lived to be only 59, but his mother made it to 90, and outlasted him by nearly 10 years.

Dr MICHAEL HALLS
Christow
Devon

Fire-bombs on every aircraft

Sir: How many people realise – surely the aviation authorities must – that every can of hair spray, body perfume or antiperspirant is a potential incendiary?

There are warnings on airline tickets about carrying hazardous and flammable substances, such as lighter fluid, yet we all walk round with these cans in our luggage and no one says anything. If you look at the small print on your antiperspirant spray you will see dire warnings about fire.

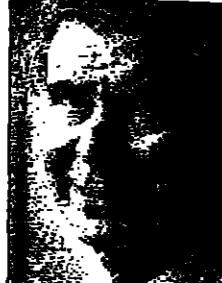
JILL GALE
Hampton on Thames
Middlesex

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150

MI5

Roll over Gutenberg – tell books the news



Andreas Whittam Smith

The Net, with its tens of thousands of sites, is a new wonder of the world

At one of the meetings during the Edinburgh Book Festival I was asked to address the question whether CD-Roms, the Internet, electronic media etc. threaten the book. What I first wanted to get across is how inchoate the new medium is. We don't even know what to call it, other than "the new medium". First there was print, then radio, followed by television: now what?

Yes, it is software, but not all software is used to facilitate communication. Yes, it is both CD-Roms and the Internet, two different ways of delivering information to your computer screen, the one by means of a compact disc, the other by means of a telephone link. But the little, hand-held electronic pet, the Tamagotchi, which beeps when it needs to be fed, bathed or exercised, or else it dies: is this an example of the new medium?

Yes, computer-generated entertainment such as games and electronic pets and creatures which you can cause to run around your screen, are part of it. Yes, it is both a leisure activity and a business tool – you can do such things as participate in auctions of surplus airline seats via the Internet if you wish.

The new medium is inchoate in a second sense: it has many technical shortcomings. The computer screen is not a convenient way of reading large amounts of text. I like to print out any e-mail message of more than 100 words or so. The quality of the individual formats – text, sound, still picture, moving image – is poor to average. Moreover the medium requires more adeptness by the user than print, radio or television.

This medium is struggling to become a channel of mass communication. It will succeed only when it is easy to use and reliable in operation, and when it finds its own voice. So far as technical advances are concerned, the idea of providing simple Internet access via the TV screen in place of an expensive personal computer is being developed. Unfortunately, so-called Web TV provides inferior resolution and you would have to buy a keyboard if you wanted to use it for email. More promising is the notion of introducing a cut-down version of the PC, the so-called network computer, which would allow you to call up the computing power you need when you need it. Work is also being done on upgrading the "pipe" – the telephone wire or cable that carries digital information from one computer to another.

By finding its own voice, I mean a process comparable to the early development of the cinema. The cinema quickly stopped being the theatre on screen and became a new discipline. In the same way this new medium is not simply books on screen, or a *mélange* of the older

media. It is on its way to something. To see what direction this might be, look at what has been successful so far and seems to be authentically of the medium. E-mail is fast becoming a universal means of communication. An electronic version of the letter post, it is cheap, it is fast, it is global; and it has even engendered a special form of English that is something between that of a letter and a telephone conversation.

On-line retailing of books and records is growing space. Like many people, I browse book reviews in newspapers and magazines rather than bookshelves in a bookshop. I buy books on the Internet because I can place my order at any moment, because 10 times more titles are available than a bookshop can provide, because I know what I am buying, so there are no issues of quality, and because the prices are good even when postage is added in.

With *Encarta*, Microsoft has shown that the combination of media – multimedia – and the power to manipulate data and to search through it rapidly, brings the encyclopaedia to a level which is far superior to what books can achieve. Computer games are the fiction of the new medium; the "shoot-em-ups" are equivalent to pulp fiction, a game like *Myst* is more akin to Tolkien. For the players they are as absorbing as reading a novel.

The Internet itself, with its tens of thousands of web sites, created alike by individuals, by institutions, by corporations, by local and national governments, is a new wonder of the world. It is a vast, global, randomly assembled store of information, growing every day, which can be searched with remarkable facility and at very low cost. It is a world library that will shortly be superior to the American Library of Congress and the British Library combined. And the Internet doesn't employ a single librarian.

These are the successes. Apart from *Encarta*, none of them directly threatens books, newspapers and magazines. History shows that the new media developed during the past century have not obliterated their predecessors as, say, the combined forces of the railway and the motor vehicle extinguished horse-drawn transport. The cinema left the theatre intact; TV did not overwhelm radio. The losses were minor. Music hall died; cinema largely gave up documentaries to TV; books are losing encyclopaedias.

But the indirect threat is immense. The box next to the computer screen is an extremely powerful device. The new medium is the most participative of all. And it is effortlessly global. I would guess that 95 per cent of its potential is unrealised. It really is inchoate. But there is a phrase we use which may be more prescient than we realise: we ask whether so-and-so is computer literate or not. Already we equate computers with literacy.



Tuscan romance: but will the mood linger on when Westminster's cruel realities return?

Roger Allen

The holiday's over, now the heat is on

by Fran Abrams

After the holiday, the hangover. When the Prime Minister's limo sweeps through the gates of Downing Street later this week after a couple of days' acclimatisation at Chequers, Tony Blair will hardly expect the ecstatic flag-waving that marked his first arrival.

He might reasonably have believed when he left for Tuscany that his reunion with the voters of Britain would be a tender one. Four months into a marriage, it is the least a groom could do.

Instead, though, he will return to find the Scottish wedding party wagging family warfare, the Montserrat contingent complaining loudly that they did not get a big enough slice of the cake, and the mortgage on the marital home threatening to spiral out of control.

Mr Blair's love-affair with the electorate is not over yet, of course, but could the honeymoon be coming to an end?

After the unbounded joy of May, the warm glow of June and the post-Budget self-congratulation of July, August has not been the kindest of months. It is never, of course, a running sore before Christmas as the extent of corruption in other Scottish Labour Party branches becomes clear. Already the Tories have made capital out of the suspensions of the Govan MP Mohammed Sarwar and the West Renfrewshire member Tommy Graham, but there may be more to come when a forthcoming report on Labour in Glasgow is published. Any one of four or five other low-level rows grumbling on across Scotland may easily blow up into a major incident before the year is out.

The autumn drags on, there will be pitfalls aplenty for Mr Blair's new government. Paisley may have seemed like a nasty accident in the middle of August, but could well become a running sore before Christmas as the extent of corruption in other Scottish Labour Party branches becomes clear.

Already the Tories have made capital out of the suspensions of the Govan MP Mohammed Sarwar and the West Renfrewshire member Tommy Graham, but there may be more to come when a forthcoming report on Labour in Glasgow is published. Any one of four or five other low-level rows grumbling on across Scotland may easily blow up into a major incident before the year is out.

But if the Prime Minister is tempted to heave a sigh of relief that he was out of the country when the champagne went flat, he should restrain himself. August may have brought a few notes of discord between the Government and its electors, but September just might see

project may well cause a headache or two, as well. Mr Mandelson's decision last week to spend an extra £8m on the roof of the dome may have passed off relatively quietly, but he is not out of the woods yet. Who will take the fall when the bill for the exhibition begins to enter the stratosphere? Will Mr Blair still be out of the firing-line when public unease turns to real anger?

The dead of winter will see the return of some of those perennial problems from which it was Labour's wont, in opposition, to make capital out of the expense of the Tories. This year Labour will pay the price when a flu epidemic stretches hospital services to breaking-point and doctors complain that the sick are dying because of a lack of funds. This year it will be the Tories who cash in when teacher redundancies lead to another rise in class sizes, and when schools complain that they still cannot afford to buy the books they need.

There will be other problems, too. The Northern Irish peace process hangs in the balance, and the BSE crisis, which was once the 'Tories' *bête noire*, could soon become a trial for Labour as thousands of carcasses wait in warehouses to be incinerated. Students who will be expected to pay £1,000 per year in fees from next year cannot be expected simply to swallow the charge without further protest, and it is conceivable that they will find allies among some of Tony Blair's backbenchers.

Of course there will be no flag-waving crowds in Downing Street this week, not least because most of the party hacks who staged the demonstration last time are still away on their holidays. Tony Blair should not be surprised by any of this. The truth of the matter is that normal politics has been resumed.

When Gerald Ford was elected, he told Congress: "I do not want a honeymoon with you; I want a good marriage."

New Labour, on the other hand, chose to go for full-blown, dizzy-headed euphoria. It worked for a while, but nobody ever seriously thought it was going to last. And the bigger the party, the bigger the headache the morning after.

Answers to life's mysteries? We've got 'em



Miles Kington

Today we look at some of the biggest unanswered mysteries of modern times – and we answer them!

If Colonel Tom Parker signed

Elvis Presley to a contract which

diddled the singer out of millions

of dollars, and diverted half Presley's fortune Parker's way, what

on earth happened to all the

money while Colonel Parker got?

Colonel Parker spent a large

part of his income on buying and

maintaining a huge plantation

home near Memphis called Park

erland, which to this day has

never been open to the public,

and which is a shrine to the genius of Colonel Tom Parker.

It is full of unsmoked cigars and dollar bills.

If you build more roads, we are told, it only creates more traffic.

A road-building programme to relieve traffic congestion tempts more people on to the roads, and so on. But we can all remember that things used to be worse than they are now.

There may have been queues on the M25 yesterday, but what about the appalling bank holiday queues that used to form around Exeter before they built the motorway, queues which regularly made the news headlines? Surely there were worse holiday jams 20 years ago? Things do get better, don't they?

I am afraid it is true that more road-building creates more traffic. But the reverse is true as well. Less road-building creates more traffic just as much as more does. The queues on the Exeter bypass of 20 years ago were created by less road-building. Today's queues are created by more road-building.

Today's queues are created by more road-building. So clearly less road-building is just as bad as more road-building, but at least it's cheaper.

Why don't we put more money into British athletics and recapture the great triumphs of yesterday?

Another fallacy here, I'm afraid. In the days when Britain had such world-beating runners as Bannister, Brasher, Ibbetson, Chataway and Pine, nobody put any money into sport at all.

Then why don't we put less money into British athletics and recapture the great triumphs of yesterday that way?

Another fallacy here, I'm afraid. There never was a time when we were the best runners in the world. There was only a time when we had the best five or 10 runners in the world. The rest of the nation was not better at running than it had ever been.

The best distance runner today comes from Kenya, but do you think the average Kenyan today can run five miles without getting puffed? Or indeed being shot by the Nairobi police?

Is Radio 4 really being "dumbed down" to make it more downmarket and get the listening figures up?

No. What is happening is that the BBC has made an enormous loss on its crazy decision to spend vast sums of money covering the last days of Hong Kong and James Boyle, the new controller of Radio 4, has been under instructions to pay for the Hong Kong fiasco by making radio as cheaply as possible. The cheapest radio of all is that provided by the listeners, and that is why more and more programmes are taking contributions from the listeners themselves – you've probably noticed how *Jazz Record Requests* is getting more space, how *Pick of the Week* now welcomes listeners' tips, and so on.

In what way is the end of the century going to ruin all computer packages? I fail to understand why going from 1999 to 2000 will bring the world of technology to a close.

Don't you worry your pretty little head about the reasons why – what is important is how we are going to get round it. Luckily, Peter Mandelson has been heading a secret committee looking into how we can get round the problem, and the solution is one that will appeal to all spin-doctors. We are going to rename the year 2000 and call it AD 199a, and so on.

If it was so very wrong for all those MPs to accept money from Mohamed Al Fayed, why was there nothing wrong in Mr Fayed giving them the money? Why has he come out of it some sort of hero for stuffing brown envelopes full of money? And what about his son? Is Dodi Al Fayed paying Diana sums of money in envelopes to answer certain questions? And what about his magazine, *Punch*? Why has that fearless satirical organ made no mention of Dodi and Dodi, which is the biggest story in weeks?

I have no idea. It is certainly very curious. I will let you know if I find out.

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When there's just no room at the inn

A JOURNEY AROUND THE WHOLE ISLAND OF GREAT BRITAIN



WITH
PAUL VALLEY

I was the windows that finished me off. It was, it seemed, theuggiest and most sweltering of three hot and humid nights. The hot room was like a sauna. And bits of roughly-sawn wood had been screwed into the runnels of all the six windows in the room so that they could not be opened beyond a merely three inches.

It was not some dive in a seedy eight district designed to keep the beggars out or the clients in. It was Preston's poshest, the Palace Hotel, a stately Victorian Gormenghast on top of the hill overlooking the spa town at the heart of the Derbyshire Peak District. I rang reception. "Some people seem to have screwed my windows," I said.

"Ah yes," said the abashed voice on the other end. "It's health and safety. All the windows have been fitted shut for health and safety." What was the nature of their risk assessment, I wondered. Did I look suicidal? Or a likely victim of vertigo? So far as health and safety were concerned, wasn't it more likely, I suggested, that I would collapse from heat exhaustion? "Can I be allowed to another room?" No, said the voice, because it wasn't just the first floor which had been done; the windows had been secured on all floors.

"Just get room service to send up screwdriver then and I'll do them myself," Sorry, only maintenance could do that and they would not be until the morning. I harumphed and, ignoring the notice about the safeguarding of valuables, propped open the bedroom door with a chair, and fell into a fitful sleep.

I was fed up with hotels, I decided the next day, as I descended from Derbyshire hills to the flat.

There were two beds, piled with duvets and soiled clothing. "I'll put a third bed in the corner," she said. Desperate to deposit my bags, I agreed. It was an odd place. The bare floorboards were speckled with paint, the wallpaper was torn and the light-bulb bare. But there were dried flowers on the old sewing machine treadle and on the mantelpiece, despite the Chris de Burgh tapes, was *AJ Ayer's Language, Truth and Logic*, a volume on Krishna and the Bhagavat and a primer entitled *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*.

It was late when I returned. In the bar a grotesquely fat drunk called Larry – with bristling head, bulging neck and rolling eyes – was losing on the pool table, and to a woman. He cursed with astonishing frequency, not merely between words but between syllables. "Larry, don't call the customers bitches," admonished the barmaid, bizarrely picking on the mildest of his insults. Periodically Larry offered to fight anyone in the room. He leered aggressively up to me and put his nose two inches from mine. Just then, another drunk who claimed to be the husband of the pool-table woman, intervened.

I had ordered a pint of beer. Where, I wondered, was the safest place to drink it? "Do you mind if I join you?" I said to the two men at the table furthest from the pool table.

"Yes, we do actually," one said. I had already sat down and, hoping that this was what passed for badinage locally, I decided to ignore it. The objector, who was also spectacularly drunk, began to tell me how he was a taxi driver who had just been snappled by a speed camera

Tomorrow: Knottingley

obituaries / gazette

Leo Jaffe

As Chairman of the Board of Columbia Pictures, Leo Jaffe, a scrupulously honest and deeply honourable man, was responsible for chairing a series of astounding internecine boardroom struggles that resulted in the disgraced Columbia executive, the liar and felon David Begelman, having his forfeited position virtually restored to glory, and the honest broker executive Alan Hirschfeld removed from his position as President simply because he had incurred the wrath of certain board members.

The so-called "Begelman Scandal", dubbed "Hollywoodgate" by the *New York Post*'s reporter Liz Smith, broke in the autumn of 1976 when the actor Cliff Robertson discovered that a cheque made out to him and allegedly endorsed by his own signature had never reached him, nor was he due any payment from Columbia. It transpired that Robertson was one of four Hollywood residents, including the director Martin Ritt, whose names had been forged by the former agent David Begelman, then Columbia Pictures' senior executive vice-president, and head of Columbia Pictures Studios.

Jaffe was the first person to be confounded by Hirschfeld, the head of Columbia. Although much of Jaffe's own authority had been curtailed on Hirschfeld's installation, Jaffe was rightly regarded as venerable and influential. Jaffe stayed on, weathering the Begelman scandal with dignity until 1981.

Leo Jaffe had been majoring in business studies at New York University when he took a summer job at Columbia in 1930, only six years after the studio had been officially founded by Harry Cohn and his brother Jack Cohn. Jaffe was offered a permanent auditing position at the completion of his summer job. He accepted, and managed to complete his formal education at night. Under Harry Cohn, aided greatly by the director Frank Capra, Columbia

dragged itself up from its poverty-row bootstraps, and Leo Jaffe rose through the ranks to become vice-president in 1954, assistant treasurer vice-president in 1956, first vice-president treasurer in 1958 and executive vice-president in 1962.

Jack Cohn died in 1956, and Harry Cohn followed two years later after Columbia's staggering 1957 multiple Oscar win with *The Bridge On The River Kwai* – ending a truly remarkable period where Columbia Pictures, unlike any other Hollywood studio, had never gone into the red. Sam Briskin succeeded Cohn as the head of production, and it was he who

promoted Leo Jaffe to vice-president, and the associate Abe Schneider to chief executive.

The studio enjoyed a run of European-based hits, including *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), and *Dr Strangelove* (1964), which were both critical and popular successes, prompting Jaffe and Schneider to open a London base in 1965. This resulted in a flurry of "swinging London" movies, but also the excellent *A Man For All Seasons* (1966) and *Oliver!* (1968).

The Sixties were good for Columbia, with across-the-board triumphs like *Born Free* (1966) from the British base, and the tremendously influential *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Five Easy Pieces* (1970), key examples of

a perceived new independence in American cinema.

But the early Seventies saw a series of expensive catastrophes – Richard Harris as *Cronwell* (1970), Liv Ullman in the utterly unnecessary musical version of *Lost Horizon* (1973), the over-long and simplistic *Independence Day* (1972) – that seemed unstoppable. These were megabudget movies with little audience potential to justify their costs, leaving Columbia with debts of \$20m, and extremely vulnerable. This led to the Wall Street investment banking firm of Herbert A. Allen & Company picking up the studio, and to the promotion of Leo Jaffe as chairman of the board in 1973.

The veteran producer Ray Stark masterminded Allen's 1973 take-over. He hired Alan Hirschfeld as head of Columbia Pictures, and David Begelman as president of Columbia Picture Studios, both with the title President and Chief Executive Officer, under Jaffe's Board Chairmanship.

Under this new management, Columbia began the long climb back. New movies were openly more adult, the creative responsibility, though supervised as tightly as any studio in Hollywood, offering a degree of new freedom under Hirschfeld and Begelman's benign liberal control.

Their 1973 story *Watch The Skies!* was to become 1977's success *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*; a tale loosely based on a local hairdresser became 1975's adult hit *Shampoo*; Martin Scorsese delivered the astonishing *Taxi Driver* (1975); Oliver Stone wrote the sensationalist expose *Night Shift Express* (1977), while *Tommy* (1975), *The Deep* (1977), and *Funny Lady* (1975), the sequel to the smash *Funny Girl* were proof, if proof were needed, that the studio was well and truly back on its feet under the new regime.

But it was on the eve of the premiere of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* that the Begelman affair burst wide open. In

a year when Columbia was verging on a \$300m take Begelman was revealed to have embezzled over \$61,000 – a pretty sum in Hollywood terms – by forging signatures and abusing his position. At a series of intense board meetings, presided over by Jaffe, Hirschfeld righteously tried to have the errant Begelman removed, but Columbia's new track record and Begelman's own popularity within the closed film community made that exceedingly difficult, despite the fact that Begelman was clearly a habitual liar and appropriator of other people's money.

The whole affair appalled Jaffe, whose boardroom speech was reported in *David McClinic's Indecent Exposure* (1982): "There are certain things you can forgive a man for doing as a human being, but that have no place in a publicly-owned company. We have to think about the public, the shareholders, and our employees. What do we say to the next person who steals? Do we have a double standard? Executives can steal, but employees at a lower level can't?"

It was a powerful, reasoned, cogent, humanitarian argument, but the board, impressed by Begelman's own appearance before it, turned against Hirschfeld and Jaffe, and amazingly Begelman, though initially suspended, was reinstated in a stronger position than ever. It was Jaffe who publicly announced that if Begelman was to return to Columbia, Hirschfeld must have a new contract, to show that he was actually running the company. It was also Jaffe, as chairman, who was entrusted with informing the California police that Columbia would not file charges against Begelman.

Understandably, Hirschfeld was furious, and Begelman's victim Cliff Robertson went public over the affair. Hirschfeld used Jaffe as a conduit to communicate with the board, and on 31 March 1978 Begelman was fi-

nally arrested on four charges of felony – one count of grand theft and three counts of forgery.

Hirschfeld had angered Herbert Allen by his handling of the affair, and Jaffe was asked to give him the news that Allen wished him fired along with the eventual removal of Begelman.

Varley reported Jaffe as saying that he hoped Hirschfeld would be restrained, but on 5 July 1978 he was removed as President of Columbia, ceding power to Daniel Melnick and Frank Price, who became responsible for a run of success including *Gandhi* (1982) and *The Karate Kid* franchises.

Jaffe stayed on as chairman until 1981, and was proud to witness a major Columbia success with *Kramer vs Kramer* (1979), a marvellous tear-jerker produced by Leo's own son Stanley.

Jaffe stepped down as chairman immediately before the Coca-Cola Corporation bought Columbia Pictures for a figure of between \$700m and \$800m (about 70 per Columbia share), before the two smash hits of the Eighties, *Top Gun* (1982) and *Ghostbusters* (1984), and worked during the latter years of Columbia's disarray for President Reagan, as chairman of the US Information Agency, 1981-83.

In 1979, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences recognised Jaffe by awarding him an Oscar, the select non-competitive Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award, industry awareness that amongst one of the most appallingly corrupt scandals from a town drenched in scandal Leo Jaffe alone emerged with both honour and credit.

Tony Sloman

Leo Jaffe, film executive: born New York 23 April 1909; vice-president, Columbia Pictures 1954-56; assistant treasurer 1956-58; vice-president-treasurer 1958-62; executive vice-president 1962-73; chairman of the board 1973-81; married; died New York 20 August 1997.

Master of Leo Jaffe, vice-president and influential.

Roy Rolland



Master of drag: Rolland as Old Mother Riley in *Junior Showtime*, 1973

Following in a film star's footsteps is not an easy task, even for what today passes for a professional lookalike. But when that star was an old Irish washerwoman in bonnet, shawl and button-boots on the outside, and a man who never showed his private face to the public on the inside, then the substitute performer is a rare one indeed. Such a man was Roy Rolland.

For the younger generation who never saw the famous comedian Arthur Lucan as the original Old Mother Riley, except perhaps in a foggy film re-run on early Channel 4, but instead grew up with Yorkshire Television's *Junior Showtime* in the Seventies, the other Old Mother Riley will be an hilarious memory, even if they never knew she was really a man called Rolland.

Rolland was born in 1921 in Oldham, Lancashire, and thus, like his Mrs Riley predecessor, was never Irish: Lucan was born Arthur Town in Boston, Lincolnshire. Despite being 34 years younger than Lucan, when Rolland was in his Riley make-up, white wig with a bun and a big bump on the end of his nose, the two comedians could have done a perfect twin sister act. Of course, Rolland had a master of make-up to show him how, for he had spent some valuable apprentice time both on stage and in film studio as Lucan's stand-in, doubled for some active

scenes, and gone on stage for his guy's when Lucan's liquor consumption rose to an excess, an occurrence ever more frequent in Lucan's later life.

The teenage Rolland, always in love with show business, started as a lowly cast member of concert parties and seaside summer shows around the North of England. Never making much of a name for himself, it was not until he happened by chance to meet Lucan around 1950 that he got his big break.

In 1952 Lucan made his final film, *Mother Riley Meets the Vampire*, a horror comic starring Bela Lugosi, the original screen Dracula who was touring England at the time. This was Lucan's only film without his lifetime costar, Kitty McShane, who had grown too old and overweight to play Ma Riley's daughter. Dora Bryan was cast instead, and Rolland was Lucan's stand-in.

The Lucan and McShane team finally split assunder with Kitty retiring into drunken management and Lucan into drunken performance. On the evening of 17 May 1954, at the Tivoli Theatre, Hull, as the chorus girls cried "Here comes Old Mother Riley!" Lucan dropped dead in the wings. The understudy, Jess Yates, then in charge of children's programmes at Yorkshire Television, was producing a weekly variety show called *Junior Showtime*. Bobby Bennett, a clever young impressionist (his Hughe

Kelly, a name-change that seems to have happened after some contretemps with McShane. She died in 1964, after which Rolland moved to Rhyl. Here at the Gaity Theatre he starred in locally popular revues with a pantomime every Christmas. Naturally he played the dame, who naturally was called Old Mother Riley, but now and then he made a change by portraying a fashionably frocked Old Mother Goose.

In 1974, Jess Yates, then in charge of children's programmes at Yorkshire Television, was producing a weekly variety show called *Junior Showtime*. Bobby Bennett, a clever young impressionist (his Hughe

Green was especially brilliant), played the host, and tiny Bonnie Langford was his smart little stooge. Inspired perhaps by seeing Rolland at Rhyl, Yates popped him into a regular sketch in the heart of the show. Old Mother Riley, music-hall queen of the Thirties, film star of the Forties, was back in action, a telly star of the Seventies.

Riley entered from her cottage in Paradise Row, waved farewell to Ivy Gimble, her neighbour, and sang "I'll Be Your Long Dead Liver From Liverpool" as she made out her shopping list: "Half of best end of duck and three quarters of silver-verse of goose!"

I was the script-writer, draw-

ing on my many memories of the original. But there was one major difference between Lucan and Rolland, despite the arms that wagged like railway signals and funny flat feet: Rolland was completely unable to manage the proper Riley gabble-talk, much of which I still recall from Lucan's 1942 radio series. "Good evening, Mr and Mrs Wavelength, long, short and medium, Home and Forces and the cat's-whisker. It's me, I'm here and I'm taking the air!"

After Jess Yates' scandals and the disappearance of *Junior Showtime*, Rolland found himself a guest star in Danny La Rue's *Summer Show* at the Blackpool Opera House. Here the two masters of drag played Mother Riley and her daughter Kitty in the remarkable recreation of the first great Lucan and McShane sketch from the 1930s. "Bridget's Night Out" began with Riley lamenting the lateness of Kitty's homecoming. The clock strikes three: "One o'clock three times!" The finale was a mélange of smashed crockery as a huge dresser full of plates and dishes is reduced to rubble. It was the last laugh of British music-hall and of Rolland.

Denis Gifford

Roy Rolland, comedian: born Oldham, Lancashire 29 June 1906; died Rhyl, Clwyd 16 August 1997.

ing away from dependency on foreign investment and credit, and by extended pensions rights for many people.

At the same time, he was a champion of "a car for every Colombian family", and was instrumental in bringing the French car-makers Renault to Colombia. He also promoted the first national environmental legislation in Latin America.

End of his four year-term in office came in 1974, which also saw the end of the National Front government. Pastrana then took on the mantle of the "natural leader" of the Conservative party. He proved unable to form a government with a famous four-point strategy. He attempted to boost national savings as a way of

moving away from dependency on foreign investment and credit, and by extended pensions rights for many people.

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By this time, leadership of the Conservative party had passed to Pastrana's son, Andres, who

however, and in consequence there has only been one Conservative candidate since his own term in office.

As an elder statesman, Pastrana was appointed a member of the Constituent Assembly in 1991, which tried once again to resolve Colombia's political turmoil by reforming the Constitution in a way that would allow more sectors of society to play a role in national politics. Pastrana soon resigned out of disgust at the manoeuvres going on to make it constitutionally impossible to extradite suspected drug traffickers to the United States.

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Conservative party had passed to Pastrana's son, Andres, who

stood as candidate in the 1994 elections and seemed an almost sure winner. In the second round however, he was beaten by the revitalised campaign of the liberal candidate, Funes Sánchez – a campaign which

Colombians were convinced had been largely financed by the drug cartels. This led him to increasingly bitter attacks on the new president, until ill-health forced his retirement. At his death, though, both political friends and opponents praised his honesty and his complete devotion to his political cause.

Nick Caistor

Misael Pastrana Borrero, politician: born Nariño, Colombia 14 November 1923; Minister of Interior, Colombia 1966-68; Ambassador to the United States 1968-69; President of Colombia 1970-74; married María Cisneros Arango (three sons; one daughter); died Santa Fe de Bogotá, Colombia 21 August 1997.



Pastrana: cautiously progressive

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Births, Marriages & Deaths

Deaths

Internecine warfare adds to uncertainty dogging WH Smith

WH Smith, the 205-year-old retailing group feeling the heat of institutional dismay, could hold centre stage this week. Tomorrow it is due to produce yearly results and under normal circumstances could be expected to outline its plans, even offering a few hints where it is going.

But normality is something which has deserted the famous old newspaper distributor. It is operating in something of a power vacuum without a chief executive and with four internal candidates jockeying for the top job. There also appears to be one outsider, ex-Burton director Stuart Rose.

Bill Cockburn, the former Post Office chief called in to shake up the bewhiskered group and redefine its future role in Britain's fiercely competitive and ever-changing retail industry, has quit.

He announced his departure in June but was expected to remain at the struggling group

until October when he joins BT as head of its domestic operations.

The Cockburn desk was, however, vacated at the beginning of August. Insiders paint a gloomy picture of life at the top without Mr Cockburn or a replacement.

The group, they say, lacks strategic direction. And the four internal candidates can hardly be expected not to take every opportunity to improve their chances. Each has supporters within the group which has, in effect, led to factional infighting.

Chairman Jeremy Hardie is the stop-gap chief executive, running the company as well as being involved in the selection procedure.

Sean Eddie, John Richards and Nathan Cockrell, the retail team at NatWest Securities, say although the search for a new man at the top may not be concluded for another month "the effects of the current inter-

necine fighting may be felt more immediately as well as over the next few months".

NatWest expects profits to come out at £125m. In the previous year, as Mr Cockburn indulged in a sweeping reorganisation, Smith suffered its first loss, not an insignificant £194.7m.

Although the shares have fallen sharply from the heady days when the Cockburn presence inspired confidence, they have enjoyed the occasional flurry as takeover hopes have surfaced.

Two stories go the rounds. One is a break-up bid, an adventure which would not be easy to accomplish at a profit. Still, some fund managers think breaking up is the option Smith's management, when in place, should explore. One of the company's directors is rumoured to be in favour of a dismantling exercise.

What could have been the first move in any break-up was

attempted when Virgin recently offered £135m for Smith's 75 per cent of the Our Price record chain. Virgin holds the balance. The proposal was

rejected by Mr Cockburn. The other recurring yarn is an old-fashioned takeover, with Tesco itching to provide the predatory

superstores group is anxious to develop its Metro-style outlets. It has become impatient with the slowness of piecemeal expansion and sees, it is said, the Smith chain as a short cut to achieving its goal.

There is some debate whether Tesco would keep or sell shops and parts of its business which would not fit its Metro ambitions.

Last week was again volatile for equities, with Footsie experiencing another fraught Friday. Significantly, the revival in the second and third-liners

also faltered. The hesitancy is a blow to fund managers who specialise in small companies and the army of private investors who feel drawn to the market's under-card.

Hugo Deschampsneufs, chairman of little Atheneum Trust, which specialises in smaller businesses, is happy to report a 23.6 per cent asset value increase but dismayed at the big-is-beautiful attitude of large institutional investors.

He complains institutions are preoccupied with blue chips. They have alighted on big companies because they feel "a bell will sound for the end of the bull market at which point they sell and walk away with a large gain - something they could not do with illiquid, small companies".

He adds: "I think that this strategy is flawed and many of them will not succeed in spotting the time when it comes."

As for blue chips, Goldman Sachs, the US investment

giant, has become more positive although its market rating has merely moved from under-weight to neutral.

It points out that London remains "the most inexpensive market in Europe" and the "relative valuation picture has become more compelling as market performance has lagged behind the Continent".

Goldman sees Footsie in a year's time standing at 5,000 points. NatWest says it is cautious about the remainder of this year, shooting for a year-end 4,600, but is on 5,100 for next August. The most bullish 12-month forecast comes from Dresdner Kleinwort Benson - it shoots for 5,450.

Although Smith is the only major company with figures tomorrow the traditional blue-chip reporting day, Thursday, offers Ladbroke, Reckitt & Colman, Rolls-Royce and T&T.

The betting to hotel group, fresh from its 49% fixed-odds

game success against Camelot, should gallop in with a 30 per cent advance to £95m at the interim stage. Gaming should provide much of the impetus.

Reckitt & Colman's six-month figures are likely to be much less impressive. A £5m or so decline to around £160m is the expectation.

Now shorn of traditional lines like Colman's mustard and Robinson's barley water the group concentrates on such areas as pharmaceuticals and toiletries.

It is one of the market's old takeover chestnuts - Unilever is the current favourite to pounce. Chief executive Vernon Sankey is used to the rumours which have abounded, since he joined Reckitt & Colman in 1971.

Rolls-Royce, the aero engine group, is likely to produce interim profits comfortably higher at £131m against £79m and engineer T&T should offer six-month figures of £68m, down from £80m.

STOCK MARKET WEEK

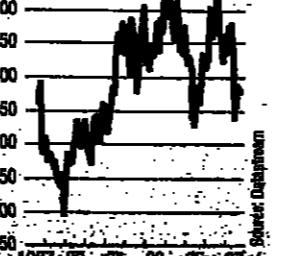
DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year



WH Smith

Share price, pence



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Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 50 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: Ex rights x Dividend x Ex di u Unlisted Securities Market x Suspended

pp Party Paid pm NI Paid Share x A1 Stock

Source: FT Information

The Independent Index

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Interest Rates

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------|-------|
| UK | 700% | Germany | Discount | Japan | |
| France | 320% | London | 4.50% | Belgium | 0.50% |
| Intervention | 320% | Paris | 4.50% | Spain | 5.50% |
| Discount | 0.25% | Paris | 4.75% | Central | 2.50% |
| Netherlands | 0.25% | Dusseldorf | 5.25% | Switzerland | 3.00% |
| Advances | 320% | Dusseldorf | 5.25% | Denmark | 1.00% |

Source: FT Information

Oil Exploration

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------|-------|
| UK | 700% | Germany | Discount | Japan | |
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Source: FT Information

Oil, Integrated

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------|-------|
| UK | 700% | Germany | Discount | Japan | |
| France | 320% | London | 4.50% | Belgium | 0.50% |
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Source: FT Information

Other Financial

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------|-------|
| UK | 700% | Germany | Discount | Japan | |
| France | 320% | London | 4.50% | Belgium | 0.50% |
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Source: FT Information

Retailers, Food

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------|-------|
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Telecommunications

| | | | | | |
|--------------|-------|---------|----------|---------|-------|
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| Netherlands | 0 | | | | |

business & city

FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

Business news desk: tel 0171-298 2636 fax 0171-298 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Threat of rise in German rates grows

Clifford German

The prospect of a rise in German interest rates increased yesterday after provisional figures suggested German inflation had risen to 2 per cent over the 12 months to August, the first time it had reached the 2 per cent threshold since April 1995.

The increase from 1.7 per cent in the year to July was announced by the Federal Statistics Office, based on provisional figures from four German states. If the new figure is confirmed when full figures are released next month it lifts the inflation rate up to the Bundesbank's target rate.

Capital investment and construction activity remain depressed and unemployment is still high, but the Bundesbank also revised German industrial output figures for June upwards yesterday from 1.4 per cent to 3 per cent, while the International Monetary Fund confirmed forecasts for a buoyant German economy, with growth reaching 2.3 per cent this year and 2.6 per cent next year.

The German stock market shrugged off comments by Chancellor Kohl that he has no intention of reshuffling his cabinet in spite of calls from his coalition partners the CSU for an extra seat to compensate them for the abolition of the ministry of telecommunications later this year.

Swiss shares also closed lower, and the Dutch market lost most of its early gains because of the signals from Germany. But the Italian market still ended the day higher, valuing its 20-store network by 25m.

Shares in New York shrugged off initial losses and the Dow Jones index was almost 60 points higher by mid-morning before suffering a fresh downturn which reduced the gains to 15 points by midday. The market is now waiting for news of US durable goods orders and US consumer confidence figures for July, both due today.

Elsewhere in Europe trading was generally subdued but stock markets were torn between fears of a rise in German interest rates and optimism inspired by the continuing strength of shares on Wall Street.

French finance minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn warned yesterday of an adverse effect on the French government's economic growth target and the French government's attempts to qualify for membership of the European single currency if US or German interest rates rise. As long as they do not raise rates the French economy could expect healthy growth of between 2.9 per cent and 3 per cent next year.

A precautionary rise in German interest rates could however be signalled as early as today when the Bundesbank sets its weekly repo rate at which it will make funds available to the money markets. The rate has been unchanged at 3 per cent for more than a year.

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The Paris Bourse lost initial gains of around 1 per cent and the CAC-40 index closed 5.66 lower at 2,898.57 because of worries about the knock-on effects of higher German interest rates. Banks and financial stocks were worst affected.

Car stocks Peugeot and Renault both rallied however, after the French finance minister said a tax on diesel fuel would only be justified if it applied in all EU countries. The shares had fallen last week on fears that the French government would unilaterally apply a tax on diesel fuel to limit pollution. Thomson-CSF and Dassault Aviation continued gains made last Friday after the defence minister confirmed decisions on the future of the two companies would be announced next month.

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Richard Joseph, who founded Books etc with his father Philip Joseph in 1981, said yesterday the full listing would raise £25m-£30m in new money and value the business at £30m-£40m.

"We believe there is a lot more consolidation to come in the book-selling business, and the flotation will give us the ability to make acquisitions when the opportunities arise," Mr Joseph said.

He will become chairman and chief executive of the company while Nigel Whittaker, a former director of Kingfisher, will become non-executive

deputy chairman. The placing to institutions will also enable the company to expand further outside the South-east where its 20 stores are concentrated.

Mr Joseph aims to open 14 more stores over the next four years including stores in Manchester and Edinburgh.

In the year to 31 January 1997 the company made a pre-tax profit of £31.15m. Mr Joseph is confident the company can pursue rapid growth. "We have a good name in London, and we have invested a lot in systems and

people," he says. He points out that the UK book market is worth around £3.2bn and is forecast to grow at 5 per cent a year for the foreseeable future. Independent retail chains account for 21 per cent of the market.

Charterhouse Tilney Securities has been appointed sponsor and stockbroker to the float. Mark Sebba, a former director of Charterhouse bank and finance director of Golden Rose Communications, will also join the board as a non-executive director.

Selling books runs in the family, according to Mr Joseph. His father Philip used to run Exclusive Books, a shop chain in South Africa which is still going strong. Joseph senior will retire as chairman of Books etc following the float and will become a non-executive director.

The company prides itself on being innovative, says Mr Joseph. He claims it was one of the first UK bookellers to adopt a "lifestyle retailing concept" into its stores. This included introducing coffee shops

in 1994 as well as extended browsing areas and a "money-back guarantee".

He says Books etc was also the first specialist chain to identify the potential of airports for successful book selling. The group operates three airport stores.

Ten years ago Hambro Group Investments took a 30 per cent stake to help the business grow. Under the flotation plan John May, managing director of Hambro Group Investments, will join the board as a non-executive director.

Mr Joseph dismisses the threat of competition from Internet-based book sellers, a number of which have been launched and floated recently.

"Most people who buy books want to see and feel them and read a chapter first before they buy them."



A good read: (from left) Philip Joseph, Christine Bachelor, Richard Joseph, Russell Barclay and John Monk of Books etc

Photograph: Tobias Harvey

John Willcock

Books etc, an independent book store chain based in the South-east, plans to come to the market this autumn to fund acquisitions and a near-doubling of its 20-store network by 2001.

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Property sales set to boost BG profits by £100m

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

BG, the former British Gas, is set to boost its profits by revealing property sales worth more than £100m in its next set of results next month, fuelling speculation that the company may be on the verge of a share buy-back worth up to £2bn.

Managers in the group's property division have used the

booming property market to sell some of the 1,100 sites under management, about 800 of which were former contaminated gas works or depots. Centrica, the demerged British Gas supply business, inherited a further 300 sites when the two sides of the old company split earlier this year. The British Gas property portfolio has already fallen from 2,000 sites in 1994. Since the start of this year BG

has made several high-profile sales of London office buildings as the group's workforce shrank. One building in Marley Arch in London's West End, raised £19m, while two more office blocks in Holborn, close to the City of London, raised another £25m.

Company sources said BG

would have sold around 200 smaller sites outside the capital by the end of June. "The property market is do-

ing well at the moment and we're taking advantage of it. But it's not fair to take a snapshot of the situation at any particular point in time. You can't look at the money raised without looking at the costs," a source said.

Though the benefit from London property sales has mostly been completed, there is

expected to be a further boost

in the second half of this year

from gas works sites sold to supermarket chains.

Analysts last week said the property sales were one of the reasons for the recent rise in BG's share price, with NatWest Securities raising their forecast for the shares to 280p. They closed on Friday up 3.5p in falling stock market, to 265.5p.

BG is considering making share buy-backs in a move to

raise its borrowings. Analysts

predicted they could total up to £2bn, though the move would prove controversial, with customers and the industry watching.

The company had fought off

gas's plans to slash its pipeline charges, claiming they represented the "biggest smash and grab raid ever". But BG

accepted the proposals after a

Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation.

Greenalls to give pub grub a lift

Andrew Yates

Pub grub is about to be transformed under plans being hatched by Greenalls, one of Britain's largest pub groups.

Gone are the days of cold sandwiches and cold sausages. Soon Greenalls' customers will be able to order a bowl of oysters or a plate of smoked salmon, washed down by an expensive bottle of Chardonnay, in pubs all around the country.

Greenalls plans to launch a range of new dishes, including fish platters and a host of vegetarian meals. It is even developing new technology designed to cook a range of fresh vegetables quickly and cheaply.

The dishes will typically cost around £10 each. Greenalls will also offer a range of wines from Australia, South Africa and California costing from £15 a bottle.

Lord Daresbury, Greenalls' chief executive, wants to take the chain upmarket to attract more affluent customers.

"People used to come to pub just at lunch time but now they are coming for supper. This is about offering customer good food at good value in a casual atmosphere. It is aimed at increasing spend per head, getting them to stay longer and spend more on food and have a glass of wine or even a bottle," he said.

Greenalls plans to introduce its new menu in at least half of its 850-strong pub chain over the next 18 months. It is spending £100m to revamp its pubs, about a third of which will be used to create its new culinary delights.

The group has also unveiled plans to build a huge leisure club at The Belfry, its famous Midlands golf course, which will house 3,000 members. The existing leisure club will be turned into a 300-room conference centre. The scheme is part of a £90m investment programme designed to take The Belfry into the new millennium.

Greenalls has opened a new PGA golf course. When the development is completed it will house a 360-bedroom hotel, five restaurants, three conference centres and eight bars.

Monitor pays Willetts £25,000 for day a month

John Willcock

David Willetts, MP for Hastings, who resigned as Paymaster General last December, has been appointed an adviser to Monitor Company, an American management consultancy.

Mr Willetts will be paid £25,000 a year by Monitor for around half-a-day's work a fortnight, he said yesterday. He will add this to his other part-time post that he gained in June, that of economic adviser to Dresden Kleinwort Benson, the German-owned investment bank.

Monitor was founded in Boston in 1983 by graduates of Harvard Business School, and most of the firm's 800 staff are still based in that city, with 100 in London.

Richard Rawlinson, a spokesman for Monitor, said: "We advise mostly large multi-national companies on competitiveness issues. We see Mr Willetts helping us on the organisational parallels between governments and businesses. It will basically be a research job. He will also sit on

the Tory-dominated Standards and Privileges Committee which examined the allegation that he attempted to subvert a parliamentary inquiry into the Neil Hamilton 'cash-for-questions' affair.

Mr Willetts said the fact that Mr Willetts had resigned from the previous government had not affected Monitor's attitude to him. "We're interested in his intellectual qualities. He's respected as one of the best thinkers around today."

Mr Willetts is also a former Whip who has had a considerable influence over strategic policy-making in the Conservative party over the last 10 years. He was consultant director of the Conservative Research Department from 1987 to 1992.

A graduate of Christ Church, Oxford, he began his career in the civil service and was a Treasury official from 1978 to 1984. He went on to become a member of the Downing Street Policy Unit for two years. Then, for five years, he directed the Centre for Policy Studies.

The European single currency will go ahead on schedule on 1 January 1999 with a broad membership, according to a survey of 12 eminent economists carried out by the European Movement (EM), writes John Willcock. A majority of those polled expect the currency to be broadly successful.

None of the panelists expect the EM to join the euro in the first wave, however. The panel of economists includes Patrick Minford, Professor of Economics at Liverpool University, and Tim Congdon, director of Lombard Street Research.

The EM is a cross-party pressure group with Sir Edward Heath as its president and Peter Mandelson as one of its vice-chairmen. It said yesterday that it would publish its economists' panel survey each quarter "as a contribution to the EMU debate".

The balance of the panel at the moment expects monetary union to be broadly successful.

Two of the economists see this success as unqualified, whilst others list factors such as the operation of the stability pact

and the approach of the European Central Bank as crucial to the success or failure of EMU.

Those who believe that EMU will be a success cite low interest rates, low unemployment and inflationary benefits of a single currency.

Fears on the reduction of monetary flexibility and the risk that the European Central Bank will set interest rates too high.

Most of the panelists expect membership of EMU to be broad, with between nine and 13 countries joining.

Stephen Woodard, director of the EM, said: "The single currency debate in this country has suffered from too much ill-informed speculation and too little fact. But if Britain is to make up its mind on this crucial issue, it must be discussed in an informed way, free from prejudice and hype."

The euro was unlikely to be the disaster area its opponents predicted, Mr Woodard added.

"The single currency is going to happen – in or out. Britain has to be ready."

A job worth £313 a week that goes unnoticed

John Willcock

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KEVIN GARDINER

The strong pound is perhaps the most visible threat to growth ... however, manufacturers are in better financial shape than at any time since the Sixties, and their order books are holding at above-trend levels'

No landing in sight for UK's flying economy

No sooner has it become clear that the economy has been growing solidly than the "hard landing/soft landing" debate has begun. This seems premature, and no doubt reflects partly the understandable sense of shock felt by some commentators who have only just realised that the economy can fly at all. The City is assuming that growth will slow noticeably during the second half of the year and into 1998. But on our reading, growth may not have peaked, and a landing of any sort is not yet in prospect. This is potentially bad news for interest rates - but not necessarily for the stock market.

The strong pound is perhaps the most visible threat to growth. The current episode is now, the second-biggest, competitive squeeze in the entire post-war period. However, manufacturers are in better financial shape than at any time since the Sixties, and for the time being their order books are holding at above-trend levels, with weak export orders offset by buoyancy in the much more important home market (a source of support conspicuously missing from the increasingly-cited but much more severe 1977-1981 episode). Many models would suggest that with the world economy growing robustly, aggregate exports can withstand the strong pound.

Fiscal policy might yet cool things down. But the Budget tax increases were mostly levied on income which would have been saved, and the package was effectively neutral. The City consensus is loudly and persistently in favour of more fiscal tightening.

and Gordon Brown might yet take more decisive action, but a spring Budget could be seven months away - and in my view the Chancellor got it right the first time around. Mr Brown has an opportunity denied to previous Labour Chancellors - to copy his US and German counterparts, and let an independent central bank do its cyclical worrying for him. The Bank of England will not find it easy, but that's their problem.

Mortgage rates have risen noticeably since early May. But rates are rising from low levels, and will take a while to have an effect - not least because one in every two borrowers has an annually reviewed or fixed-rate mortgage.

Most households don't have a mortgage anyway. Indeed, for many, the net effect of the last year's policy mix remains positive: the stronger exchange rate has supported real pay, while the booming service sector has created more jobs in the last three months than the manufacturing sector has done in the last three years - a point, which should reinforce Mr Brown in his determination to remain above the immediate debate.

The main building society demutualisations are behind us. But the effect of the windfalls on spending is unlikely to have been fully recorded yet - not least because a holiday, an R-registered car and a bumper Christ-

mas are three potential candidates for windfall-supported expenditure.

The windfalls may in any case be simply the icing on a very large cake. The average household's disposable income is growing. Consumers are being reassured by falling unemployment, and are backed by a historically high savings ratio and a strong balance sheet - as nervous monetarists will increasingly testify. Confidence was rising when the windfalls were just twinkles in the carpetbaggers' eyes, as was evident from the steady rise in credit usage. And some consumers will have seen their finances transformed: a statistical guinea pig we've been tracking has seen their real post-tax and mortgage spending power double since 1990, to stand two-fifths above the peak of the previous boom in mid-1988. Spending

may still be gathering momentum, super-tanker style.

If growth does remain strong during the second half of the year, the Bank of England is unlikely to leave interest rates on hold for long. The "new paradigm" school argues that inflation risk these days is negligible, and that strong growth can continue indefinitely without pulling prices up. But the Bank is right to be sceptical.

Inflation risk is visible now. The trade-weighted exchange rate has risen by roughly a quarter, but the impact on retail prices has been smaller than expected, mostly because overseas suppliers and domestic distributors of imports have made the most of the opportunity to widen their profit margins. Anybody seen cheaper German cars, or

packaged holidays? Even manufacturers are reluctant to pass on weak costs, despite intensified competitive pressure: margins on their domestic sales are probably widening as a result, offsetting the impact of the inevitable squeeze on export margins.

Retailers and manufacturers are not exactly shouting this from the rooftops. Indeed, they are much more likely to be heard proclaiming the absence of pricing power. But while they may not be able to raise prices as much as they would like, aggregate price/cost ratios have been stronger than at the same stage of the previous

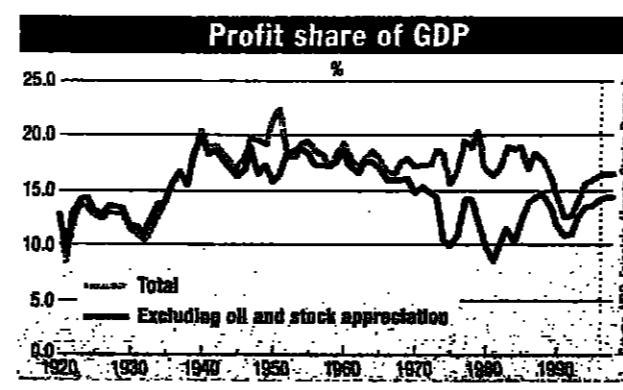
cycle. If the economy remains buoyant and costs stop falling, prices - not margins - could be the buffer.

Some inflation risk is also visible in the labour market. Wages have been remarkably well-behaved by comparison with the previous cycle. However, they look less restrained after adjusting for inflation, and much less so when measured net of taxes and mortgage rates. And there is less slack in the market than at any time in recent memory.

The official inflation target is a tough one - it has been hit in just one month in the last 30. And unless monetary conditions tighten further, it could remain elusive. Official interest rates have risen by a full percentage point since early May. They could rise by as much again and still look unremarkable.

This seems to augur badly for the stock market. But you don't need to believe that inflation is dead and that interest rates have stopped rising to make sense of the market's recent rise. Solid growth in domestic turnover, together with fatter margins, could push corporate profitability up further. Almost unnoticed, the share of profits in GDP is approaching its highest levels for a generation. And as the chart shows, it is the intervening quarter-century which looks anomalous. Not so much a "new paradigm" as a forgotten one.

Kevin Gardiner is a senior economist at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter: the views expressed are his own.



Millennium bomb could trigger bank crisis



Jon Moynihan on how computer failure could create huge liquidity problems – and give gold a boost



The queue at the bank: Will it end up stretching round the block in the great liquidity crisis of 1999?

It has been called the millennium bomb, the year 2000 problem and the 00 issue, yet it could equally be described as a many-tentacled octopus, or many-headed hydra, because its threats come in such a variety of forms.

Some threats are real; others are, or might turn out to be, imaginary. Separating real from imaginary is important because what has already been established is that not enough computer programmers exist in the world to check, in time, all the potentially compromised software. Some 00 events are already occurring, as with the 104-year-olds who are this year receiving letters summoning them to primary school.

What kind of disaster can be triggered by a computer's failure to distinguish between, say, 1900 and 2000? First, it is important to understand that it's not just lines of software that are potentially compromised.

Back in the 1970s when computer chips were created, lines of code, written in languages such as Cobol, now seen as simplistic, were hard-wired bodily into computer chip circuitry.

Because, to save significant amounts of programming, the Cobol or other programmers would in many instances have left off the first two digits of a year, that same lacuna would often have been translated straight into the chip.

Thus, not only computer code, but also some computer chips, are potentially compromised.

Many companies will be

comfortable that for the large majority of their software and chips, there is no year 2000 problem. However, the degree of confidence will not always be absolute.

For example, it might take a certain amount of *sang froid* to board one of those flights they are currently advertising which will, they say, fly through time zones into the millennium at midnight on 31 December 1999.

Will the plane definitely keep flying as midnight arrives? How bad can it get?

There is feverish activity behind the scenes to try to ensure we avoid any of the catastrophic scenarios that have been identified. However, new threats continue to emerge.

Here's a reasonably plausible one: the great banking liquidity lock-up of 1999.

In the interbank money transfer system, failure to

transmit somewhere between 5 to 10 per cent of daily payments would quite possibly be enough to lock up the entire system - if you haven't paid me, I can't pay him.

Doubtless, all banks are striving hard to have this problem solved before 31 December. But many have not yet tested the robustness of their payments software to be entirely sure.

International payments systems are so intertwined that the problem could be precipitated by banks not in the developed world - where many have not yet examined their payments system software - but by those in lesser developed countries where resources are very scarce, so even less has been done.

The problem extends beyond banks, to the companies with payment systems tied to banks, which themselves are responsible for large liquidity flows into and out of the banking system.

How many of these will fail to sort out their software in time? How many need to fail before the banking system locks up and a systemic

liquidity crisis is created? How prepared will businesses be in the run-up during 1998 and 1999, to take a chance on the fact that there won't be a liquidity crisis?

The question has pertinence because any company or indeed individual who decides that there could be a problem on 1 January 2000 would be most likely to react to such a problem by creating and hoarding liquidity for themselves.

In other words, companies and individuals concerned about this problem will start to amass cash and other liquid instruments against the potential of a short-term or even long-term systemic liquidity crisis.

If that were so, then we are back to the point that if only 5-10 per cent of assets are liquidated - or withdrawn from the system and placed in cash, gold or whatever - there will again be the potential for a liquidity crisis.

At that stage, central banks will be faced with the decision whether to flood the system with liquidity (thus potentially creating a wave of inflation and economic dislocation), or to let the affected banks fail.

Even this solution may not

be available to them if the liquidity crisis gathers speed very quickly. And even with such actions, commerce could be crippled for days, weeks or even months.

As with all liquidity crises, the threat could be self-fulfilling. Fears that it could happen could ensure that it does.

Anyone believing that a liquidity crisis could occur will want to pop out and buy their gold coins before everyone else does.

As the price of gold goes up - possibly to astronomic levels - and local liquidity scares occur, the lines round the block at bank opening time start swelling.

The great liquidity crisis of 1999? Impossible, you may say. However, there is nothing particularly outlandish in the scenario outlined above, which is made all the more feasible by the enormous reliance payments systems in the 1990s now place on their computer software. The scenario may, or may not, happen.

What should be done? Preventative measures could be taken.

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority has made it a requirement for all banks under its supervision to have a mil-

lennium compliance programme in place by the end of June 1997, guaranteeing that they will have identified and sorted out all problems by the time 2000 arrives. Similar requirements have yet to be seen in other banking jurisdictions.

Companies, unlike banks, do not face any statutory requirement. Certification of millennium-worthiness, similar to ISO-9000 certification or an S&P credit rating, has not yet emerged and is an option - but one that would have to be developed soon.

Banks and big corporations themselves should pay particular attention to their payments software and hardware in the run-up to the millennium. And for those who subscribe to disaster scenarios - perhaps a small punt on the price of gold?

Jon Moynihan is group chief executive of P4 Consulting Group.

*PA, in association with Taskforce 2000 and the OTI, produced the report, Defusing the Millennium Bomb, which tracks the progress of UK companies to achieving Millennium compliance. Copies can be obtained from *Clare Fortune* on 071-333-3367*

Siemens and HP in telecoms link

Siemens and Hewlett-Packard have signed a memorandum of understanding between their telecommunications divisions jointly to develop and market telecoms management networks world-wide, according to a joint statement issued in Munich yesterday.

Diversifying away from the white, male, middle-aged manager

Computer giant Hewlett-Packard believes discrimination adds up to a waste of talent. Roger Trapp reports

Early next month, Lew Platt, president and chief executive of Hewlett-Packard, will visit the California-based computer and office-equipment company's UK headquarters at Bracknell, Berkshire, to present three out of only five quality awards that he is making in the world this year.

With such a clear recognition of the British business's contribution to the continuing success of a group that last year achieved worldwide revenues of \$38.4bn, it might be understandable if it just basked in the glory.

But Mr Platt will find an operation in the midst of a transformation that John Golding, UK chairman and managing director, stresses

that, while earlier efforts were morally or legally motivated, the current push results from business need.

Companies are realising that by excluding certain people or barring them from promotion they risk missing opportunities and not making the best use of the talents at their disposal.

Many observers might be surprised to hear that this is seen as a problem for Hewlett-Packard - which is as well known for the management principles espoused in

the HP Way as for the sustained performance over the half-century since it was founded in garage in what is now California's Silicon Valley.

But a review of the organisation recently carried out by occupational psychologists Pearn Kanodia as part of the first stage of the diversity programme revealed hitherto unrealised problems.

Women, in particular, felt left out by a company that, according to one respondent, held meetings at "silly times" and was inflexible about fam-

ily needs. It was even felt that the culture encouraged by the HP Way subconsciously created "HP clones".

Mr Golding - one of a group of senior executives to have gone through a training programme that followed the audit - has become "evangelical" about the issue to the point of saying that he is deeply worried that every member of the European management team is like him - middle-aged, white, Anglo-Saxon and male. Consequently, when it came to gaining different points of view and opinions all bar one must be redundant.

Emphasising that the programme - which has already been under way in the United States for some time

- will become as central and all-pervasive as quality has become over the years, Ms McDermott says that great efforts are being made to impress on staff that it is not a "flavour of the month" and that it will take a long time to implement fully.

But in the meantime, she and her colleagues are demonstrating that they mean business by reinforcing rules against harassment, studying improvements to recruitment and promotion processes and spreading the message through special employee publications and training events.

While she expects there to be some who will be sceptical to the end, she stresses that the moves are not about positive discrimination

and that well-qualified male managers have nothing to fear.

And though the strong culture at the company might ostensibly make it difficult to embrace a wider cross-section of people, Ms McDermott is convinced that the HP Way produces an advantage over other companies.

Treating people fairly and with respect creates an effective platform, she says. Mr Golding adds that, though the refinement of the company's values amounts to a "fundamental change in the way we work, think and interact with each other", he is convinced this will make the organisation more competitive - essential if it is to continue to grow at the 20 per cent a year to which it has become accustomed.

PHILIPS
ECOTONE



Pick your team to take you to the World Cup Finals

THE INDEPENDENT

The new league season is now underway and again Manchester United are the team to beat. Alex Ferguson's men are the bookmakers' favourites for the championship—but would you pick Teddy Sheringham in your team?

Chelsea can be expected to mount a strong challenge as can Arsenal, with Mark Overmars their most expensive recruit. Liverpool and Newcastle United will also have a say in the destination of the title.

Can you keep up with the changes? The Independent and Independent on Sunday supported by Philips Ecotone lightbulbs the energysavers are giving you the chance. With a budget of £40 million, can you come up with a team to top them all in the Premiership this season?

HOW TO ENTER.

Firstly you will need to pick your team formation, of course there's your goalkeeper plus you have a choice of four formations for the others in your team.

FORMATION A. 4-4-2
4 Defenders, 4 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

FORMATION B. 4-3-3
4 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 3 Strikers

FORMATION C. 5-3-2
5 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

FORMATION D. 3-5-2
3 Defenders, 5 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

Once you have chosen your formation and team name pick your team of 11 players and 1 manager from the list below. Players can only play in the positions that they are listed under and their total value must not go over £40 million. Having made a note of your team dial our registration hotline. Please try to use a tone telephone—one which makes tone noises when you dial, although pulse telephones can be used to register your team.



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The overall winner, the manager who at the end of the season accrues more points than any other will win a trip to the 1998 World Cup in France. With a companion, they will see all the action of a quarter-final and semi-final of their choice, plus the final. In addition, the highest scoring team each month will win a pair of tickets to one of England's home internationals at Wembley.

The registration period has been extended - all applications should be in by midnight on Tuesday September 2.

INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

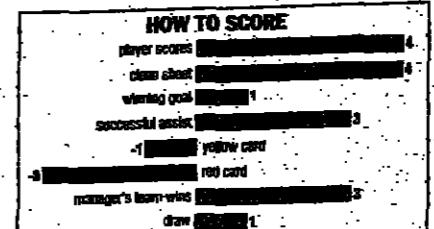
Register today, call:

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UK 0930-525-259 (pulse)

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UK calls cost 20p per minute at all times.
Republic of Ireland (tone only) 20p per minute including VAT at all times. Maximum call length 6.5 minutes.



Every time one of your players scores you get four points. There are four points for a keeper or a defender every time their team keeps a clean sheet. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e.: if there is a one goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded 1 bonus point awarded in addition to standard goal related points. Each successful Assist, a pass judged by our experts to lead directly to a goal, will give a player 3 points. The opinion of our experts on the matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

If a player is given a Yellow Card they lose 1 point, if a player is given a Red Card they lose 3 points. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count.

The Premiership Manager that you choose will be awarded 3 points if their real-life team wins, 1 point is awarded if they draw and no points are given if they lose.

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INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

| CODE | PLAYER | TEAM | VALUE | CODE | PLAYER | TEAM | VALUE | CODE | PLAYER | TEAM | VALUE | CODE | PLAYER | TEAM | VALUE |
|--------------------|--------------|---------|-------|------|-------------|------|-------|------|-------------|------|-------|------|-------------|------|-------|
| | | (£m) | | | | | | | | | | | | | (£m) |
| GOALKEEPERS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 300 | Seaman | Ars | 4.0 | 455 | Cox | Bol | 2.5 | 560 | Lundekvam | Sou | 1.2 | 679 | Sharpe | Lee | 3.5 |
| 303 | Lukic | Ars | 1.0 | 456 | Elliot | Bol | 3.0 | 563 | Scales | Tot | 3.4 | 680 | Ribeiro | Lee | 1.5 |
| 304 | Manninger | Ars | 3.0 | 457 | Fairclough | Bol | 2.0 | 564 | Campbell | Tot | 4.0 | 683 | Haaland | Lee | 2.5 |
| 305 | Bosnich | AV | 4.0 | 458 | Taggart | Bol | 2.5 | 565 | Calderwood | Tot | 2.9 | 684 | Parker | Lei | 2.5 |
| 306 | Oakes | AV | 1.5 | 459 | Bergsson | Bol | 1.5 | 566 | Austin | Tot | 2.2 | 685 | Taylor | Lei | 1.6 |
| 307 | Watson | Bar | 1.0 | 460 | Duberry | Che | 3.0 | 567 | Edinburgh | Tot | 1.6 | 686 | Izzett | Lei | 2.1 |
| 308 | Lesse | Bar | 1.0 | 461 | Petrescu | Che | 3.0 | 568 | Carr | Tot | 1.2 | 687 | Lennon | Lei | 3.2 |
| 309 | Flowers | Bla | 5.2 | 462 | Lambourde | Che | 3.0 | 569 | Mabbott | Tot | 1.5 | 688 | Guppy | Lei | 1.7 |
| 310 | Filan | Bla | 1.5 | 463 | Leboeuf | Che | 5.0 | 570 | Dicks | WH | 3.5 | 689 | Barnes | Liv | 3.0 |
| 311 | Branagan | Bol | 1.2 | 464 | Sinclair | Che | 1.5 | 571 | Rieper | WH | 2.7 | 690 | Redknapp | Liv | 5.2 |
| 312 | De Goye | Che | 1.0 | 465 | Daish | Cov | 2.7 | 572 | Hall | WH | 3.0 | 693 | McManaman | Liv | 5.9 |
| 313 | Grodas | Che | 1.0 | 466 | Shaw | Cov | 2.2 | 573 | Potts | WH | 1.5 | 694 | Thomas | Liv | 3.0 |
| 314 | Ogrizovic | Cov | 2.2 | 467 | Burrows | Cov | 2.2 | 574 | Ferdinand | WH | 2.5 | 695 | Leighardsen | Liv | 4.0 |
| 315 | Hedman | Cov | 1.0 | 468 | Haworth | Cov | 1.5 | 575 | Impey | WH | 2.2 | 696 | Giggs | Man | 7.4 |
| 316 | Nash | CP | 1.0 | 469 | Edworthy | CP | 1.5 | 576 | Turner | WH | 2.0 | 697 | Beckham | Man | 7.0 |
| 317 | Poole | CP | 1.0 | 470 | Muscat | CP | 1.0 | 577 | Cunningham | Wim | 1.5 | 698 | Keane | Man | 7.0 |
| 318 | Hoult | Der | 1.2 | 471 | Tuttle | CP | 2.0 | 578 | Thatcher | Wim | 1.5 | 699 | Butt | Man | 7.0 |
| 319 | Southall | Eve | 3.0 | 472 | Linighan | CP | 2.0 | 579 | McAllister | Wim | 1.5 | 700 | Poborski | Man | 3.5 |
| 320 | Gerrard | Eve | 1.5 | 473 | Hreidresson | CP | 1.0 | 580 | Kimble | Wim | 1.5 | 703 | Lee | New | 3.6 |
| 321 | Martyn | Lee | 3.3 | 474 | Stimac | Der | 3.3 | 581 | Overmars | Ar | 6.0 | 704 | Batty | New | 3.8 |
| 322 | Beeney | Lee | 1.2 | 475 | C Powell | Der | 1.8 | 582 | Platt | Ar | 2.5 | 705 | Gillespie | New | 2.5 |
| 323 | Keller | Lei | 2.5 | 476 | Laursen | Der | 1.5 | 583 | Parlour | Ar | 2.4 | 706 | Beardsley | New | 2.0 |
| 324 | Poole | Lei | 1.5 | 477 | Eranio | Der | 2.5 | 584 | Vieira | Ar | 4.5 | 707 | Ketsbarra | New | 2.0 |
| 325 | James | Liv | 3.5 | 478 | Phelan | Eve | 1.9 | 585 | Overmars | Ar | 6.0 | 708 | Blinder | SW | 2.5 |
| 326 | Warner | Liv | 1.0 | 479 | Short | Eve | 3.0 | 586 | M Rodriguez | Ar | 2.0 | 709 | Hyde | SW | 1.8 |
| 327 | Schmeichel | Man | 5.5 | 480 | Watson | Eve | 2.7 | 587 | Taylor | AV | 1.9 | 710 | Whittingham | SW | 1.7 |
| 328 | Van Der Gouw | Man | 1.2 | 481 | Unsworth | Eve | 3.0 | 588 | Draper | AV | 3.2 | 711 | Slater | Sou | 1.5 |
| 329 | Given | New | 2.5 | 482 | Hinchcliffe | Eve | 3.5 | 589 | Marcelli | Bar | 2.0 | 712 | Oakley | Sou | 1.2 |
| 330 | Hislop | New | 2.5 | 483 | Bilic | Eve | 4.0 | 590 | Bullock | Bar | 1.2 | 713 | Anderton | Tot | 6.0 |
| 331 | Pressman | SW | 3.0 | 484 | Kelly | Lee | 3.6 | 591 | McNamee | Bar | 1.2 | 714 | Fox | Tot | 3.5 |
| 332 | Taylor | Sou | 1.8 | 485 | Wetherall | Lee | 2.5 | 592 | Howells | Bar | 2.2 | 715 | Howells | Tot | 3.1 |
| 333 | Beasant | Sou | 1.0 | 486 | Molenaar | Lee | 2.5 | 593 | McKinlay | Bar | 3.4 | 716 | Gino | Tot | 3.5 |
| 334 | Walker | Tot | 3.4 | 487 | Dorigo | Lee | 1.2 | 594 | Redfearn | Bar | 1.5 | 717 | Sinton | Tot | 3.0 |
| 335 | Bardsen | Tot | 1.0 | 488 | Robertson | Lee | 2.5 | 595 | Eaden | Bar | 1.2 | 718 | Nielsen | Tot | 2.5 |
| 336 | Miklosko | WH | 1.5 | 489 | Walsh | Lei | 2.2 | 596 | Tinkler | Bar | 1.0 | 719 | Williamson | WH | 2.0 |
| 337 | Sullivan | Wim | 2.7 | 490 | Whitlow | Lei | 1.2 | 597 | Donis | Bla | 3.0 | 720 | Earle | Wim | 3.1 |
| 338 | Ward | Wim | 1.0 | 491 | Elliott | Lei | 1.2 | 598 | Sellars | Bol | 1.5 | 721 | Ardley | Wim | 2.0 |
| 339 | Lei | Wim | 1.0 | 492 | Watts | Liv | 3.0 | 599 | Gullitt | Che | 4.4 | 722 | Fear | Wim | 2.0 |
| 340 | Ruddock | Liv | 3.0 | 493 | Ruddock | Man | 4.2 | 600 | Di Matteo | Che | 5.0 | 723 | Hughes | Wim | 2.0 |
| 341 | Matteo | Man | 2.7 | 494 | Irwin | Man | 4.2 | 601 | Wise | Che | 3.7 | 724 | Berkovic | WH | 2.5 |
| 342 | Mc McAteer | Man | 2.5 | 495 | Pallister | Man | 4.2 | 602 | Browne | Che | 2.4 | 725 | Lomas | WH | 3.0 |
| 343 | Winterburn | Man | 2.5 | 496 | Harkness | Liv | 1.2 | 603 | Thompson | Bol | 2.8 | 726 | Jones | Wim | 2.8 |
| 344 | Bould | Man</td | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

sport

Taylor's matadors put England to the sword

"What is wrong with English cricket? Why are the Australians so vastly superior to us?" These are perennial questions it seems, for the reason they appear in quotation marks, is that they come from a chapter in a book by Bill O'Reilly, called *Cricket's Conquest*, a journal about the 1948 Ashes tour.

In that summer, England lost 4-0 to who is now regarded as probably the greatest Australian side to tour. In assessing the question, O'Reilly, the Shane Warne of his day, felt that there were few times that England seemed to have a "Bolter's chance" of winning a Test match.

Fifty years on, and little has changed, for England could quite have easily lost this series 4-1 as opposed to 3-2. More revealing than the scoreline however, is that all three of Australia's victories came in a row and were won by country miles, games in which England performed as meekly as choirboys in a frontier tavern.

Although undeniably capable of intermittent brilliance, it is rigour and imagination that England mostly lack, and not only among the players. As Australia announce bold plans to select separate Test and one-day sides for the future, as well as

We have our moments and win the odd Test but, reflects Derek Pringle, it is Australia who always rise to the occasion

provide better pay for its players, England's policy makers are still squabbling around a table playing footsie.

Held back, distracted by the petty self-interest of their second masters, the county clubs, confusion reigns, and the players reflect this in their cricket. Australia on the other hand, are resilience personified.

In cold figures alone, Thorpe and Nasser Hussain scored more runs than Steve Waugh. Glenn McGrath, Warne and Ian Healy nearly always deliver. Like skilled matadors, they know exactly where and when to wound an opponent.

In cold figures alone, Thorpe and Nasser Hussain scored more runs than Steve Waugh. The difference however, is that Waugh produced the bulk of his runs with his side most needed them, and his two centuries at Old Trafford, which got Australia back into the series, must rate amongst the finest ever played on covered pitches.

Had Waugh not delivered, England, in all likelihood, would have been two up with three to play. A position, which if not exactly deserved, would probably not have been squandered.

Although the inclement weather helped to disguise the matter, England had decided to bowl this series – at least until the dustbowl at The Oval – on slow grassy pitches. To some this was pure folly. To others it was a risk worth taking, and one that until McGrath began hitting the right length and

Paul Reiffel was whistled up from his home in Melbourne, had had its moments.

And yet England's bowlers, appeared to remain far more competitive than their batting counterparts. Providing injury does not blight them, the pace trio of Andy Caddick, Darren Gough and Dean Headley all had enough moments to bode well for the immediate future.

They were however, not in the same class as McGrath (36 wickets) and Warne (24 wickets), who with their sustained accuracy, are able to build pressure until it reaches intolerable proportions. Something Atherton – McGrath's victim seven times in the series – found to his cost.

Between them, the pair provide both the first line of attack as well as the back line of defence, while anything in between, was mopped up by Gillespie, Kasprowicz and Reiffel. This is where the real difference lay and where it has lain ever since 1948.

As O'Reilly concluded even then: "The lot of an English professional bowler, chosen for England, is not a rosy one. He not only has to bowl in the more important matches for his country, but is expected to turn out the next day if need be, to do the back work for his county." We can hardly claim we were weren't warned.

England v Australia Ashes series final averages

| ENGLAND | | AUSTRALIA | |
|---------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| 1 | NO Runs HS | 100% C S | 100% C S |
| 2 | 11 2 453 138 | 50.8 | 51.8 |
| 3 | 11 2 451 207 | 55.0 | 51.3 |
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Hill running out of options after turning down Jordan

Motor racing

DERICK ALLSOP
reports from Spa-Francorchamps

In one regard, Formula One is no different from any other sport. You are only as good as your last game.

Damon Hill may be reflecting on that as he continues his pursuit of a job for next season. However, his mission will have been rendered no easier by events here this past weekend.

He finished the Belgian Grand Prix in the pits, classified a barely noticed 14th. Rather more conspicuous was the competitive and controlled drive of Jordan-Peugeot's Giancarlo Fisichella, eclipsed only by the genius of Michael Schumacher. Fisichella's performance will have reaffirmed Eddie Jordan's belief he should persist in his endeavours to prove that his team, and not Benetton, have the contractual right to the Italian's services.

Jordan has attempted to cover himself by asking Hill if he would be prepared to consider a deal in the region of \$6.5m (£4.2m). The reigning champion, it is understood, rejected the proposal, just as he turned down McLaren-Mercedes' offer of \$2m (£1.2m), plus \$1m a win, in the wake of his sterling show at the previous race in Hungary.

Hill publicly and vehemently argued that decision was justified because, although finding

a competitive car remained his priority, he felt he was entitled to a fee in keeping with his status as defending champion. His ball-park figure is \$10m.

However, there is a feeling within the sport that he blew a golden opportunity after Budapest and that his stature was badly chipped here this weekend. Revelations of the broken negotiations and an uninspiring display on the Spa track have done nothing to enhance his reputation.

Hill was overshadowed in his priority, he felt he was entitled to a fee in keeping with his status as defending champion. His ball-park figure is \$10m.

Tom Walkinshaw, the team owner, said somewhat pointedly: "Pedro's had a cracking weekend. He's been on the pace all weekend and shown that our speed in Hungary wasn't a flash in the pan. Our cars were as quick as anything on the track."

Hill, he infers by omission, did not make good of his. The Englishman admits he chose the wrong tyres at the start, as did others. Also like others, he was outclassed in every department by Schumacher. That is why any team would pay any price if they could to hire the championship leader - hailed here by Jordan as the greatest of all time - and why they are not prepared to do so for Hill. It is even suggested a number of teams have agreed to cap any offer for him.

A ruling of Fisichella's placement for 1998 could still create an opening for Hill at either Jordan or Benetton, but then he returns to the obstacle of money. Sauber were willing to meet his asking price and may still be, despite the fact Hill has already rejected them and the team said their talks had been concluded.

Post remains an option, as do Arrows. But Walkinshaw might not be prepared to pay him another \$7m, let alone increase his salary.

Rubin swept away by Tanasugarn

Tennis

JOHN ROBERTS
reports from Flushing Meadow

Big names may come and go, but the first winner in the \$254m (£158m) Arthur Ashe Stadium at the United States Open was... Tamarine Tanasugarn. The 20-year-old from Thailand, ranked No 41 in the world, swept past the American Chanda Rubin, 6-4, 6-0, after 53 minutes.

Tanasugarn did not stand on ceremony, chiefly because there was no ceremony. The pomp of inauguration had been reserved for the night session, when Whitney Houston was scheduled to exercise her lungs after a parade of former champions.

When play began at 11am there was barely a quorum in the 23,000-seat stadium, hardly a soul experiencing vertigo reality in the upper tier.

Rubin, noted for her temacity in winning marathon matches until her progress was hampered by a wrist injury, which put her out of the game for 10 months last year, never looked secure, even when leading 4-2 in the opening set. The 21-year-old from Lafayette, Louisiana, lost the next 10 games and has now been eliminated in the first round of four of her last five tournaments.

It was of little consolation for the earlybird spectators that the stadium's first winter was born in America. "At that time my dad worked in California," Tanasugarn said. "When I was five I moved back to Thailand."

"It's my first time to play in a big stadium, centre court, so I'm pretty happy," she said. "I played on Court 1 in Wimbleton two years ago in the junior

final at Wimbledon, but this is the biggest I ever played."

"The first time I felt like, 'Wow, I'm playing the biggest court in my life,'" she said about her first impression of the towering new facility. "But after that, I tried not to think anything, I tried to concentrate on my game."

Enter the 17-year-old Venus Williams to make a bigger impact for the host nation, recovering from the frustration of losing a tight first set against Larisa Neiland, of Latvia, to advance to the second round, 5-7, 6-0, 6-1.

Playing two against one appears to be the latest ploy designed to curtail the 16-year-old Mariana Hingis' haul of major titles. It transpired that the world No 1's first round opponent is pregnant.

"This will be my last tournament," confirmed Tami Whitlinger-Jones, a 28-year-old who lives in San Diego with her husband, the doubles specialist Kelly Jones.

"She feels light-headed, she'll have to stop," said her coach, Angel Lopez. "Her doctor told her to keep a lot of liquids in at all times."

Currently ranked No 102 in the world, Whitlinger-Jones won the US Open junior singles title in 1986. She is looking forward to today's challenge of playing Hingis, the youngest Grand Slam champion of the century, who already holds the Wimbledon and Australian titles.

She will not lack support. "Her whole family is coming, so she's got nothing to lose," Lopez said. "She'll have fun and try to beat her."

Mr and Mrs Jones are seeking a wild card for the mixed doubles, which would be the first

time they have played on the same side of the court as professionals. Three against two?

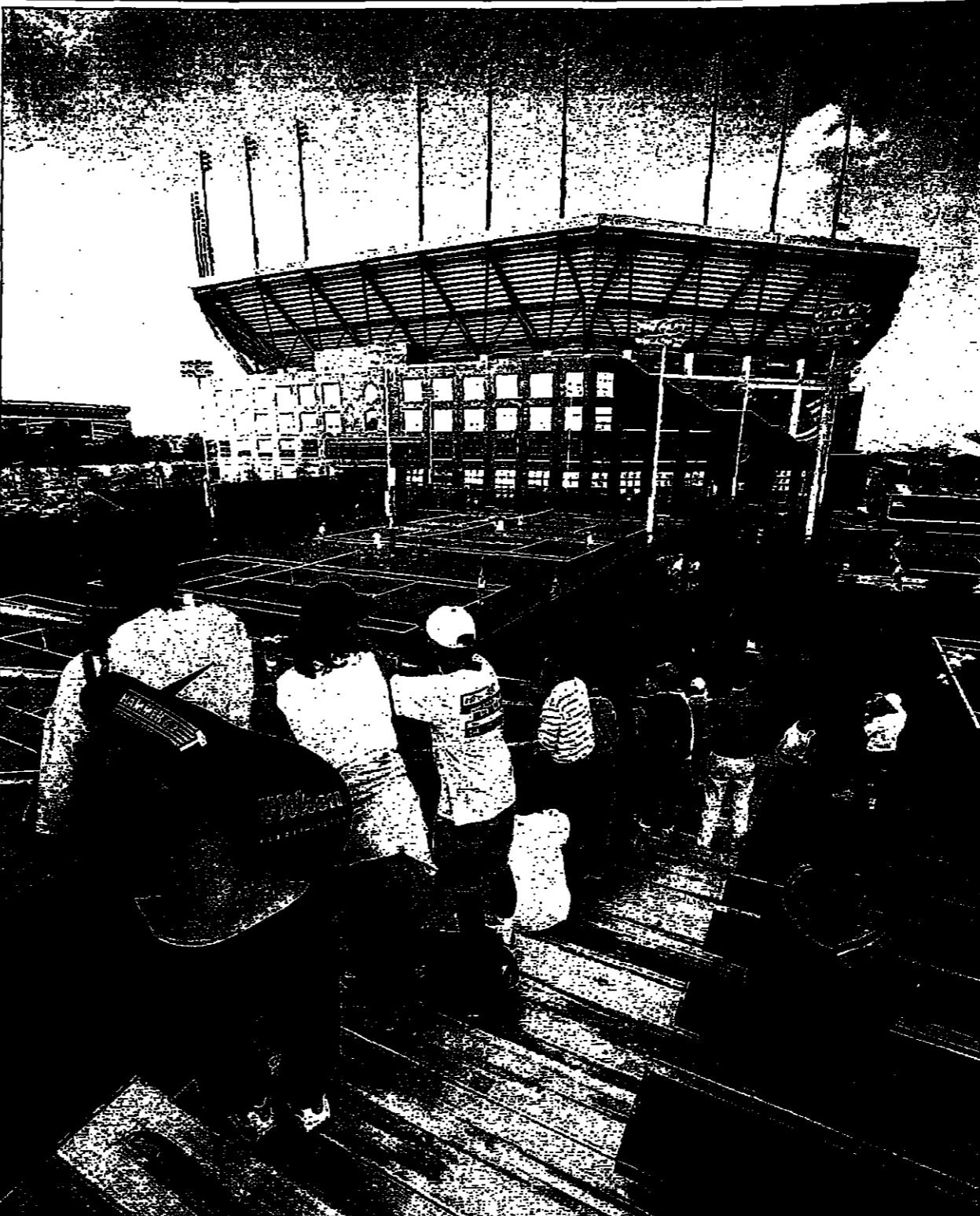
The former Centre Court, the 20,000-seat Louis Armstrong Stadium, was not entirely overlooked on the first day of the new era. Australia's Mark Philippoussis opened the men's singles there with a 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 win against Karim Almami, a Moroccan whose CV includes a victory against Pete Sampras.

Greg Rusedski replaced Tim Henman as British No 1 yesterday by rising to No 20 in the world rankings. Henman, No 21 in the world, was among the first to congratulate his rival. "He deserves to take over as No 1 the way he has been playing in the last few weeks," Henman said. "He has been playing very well, and it's good for both of us. Hopefully, we can push each other higher and higher."

Henman's coach, David Feltman, has been elected European representative on the six-man board of the ATP Tour, outvoting Guy Forget, of France, Jacco Eltingh, of the Netherlands, and Emilio Sanchez, of Spain. Henman has been elected to the tour's players' council.

Yesterday, Henman practised with Sampras, who was wearing black shoes with red toecaps. Was the conservative Wimbledon champion in the process of being given an Agassi makeover by his clothing sponsor, Nike?

A representative explained that Sampras had been given the shoes as a birthday present for a joke and was unlikely to wear them in matches, risking a rush on the sports shops. For one thing, only one pair had been made.



The new Arthur Ashe court rises behind players practising for the US Open, which began yesterday

Photograph: AP

Saints' win marred by Goulding dismissal

Rugby League

St Helens virtually assured themselves of a top-four Super League place with a 25-18 win over Leeds at Knowsley Road yesterday, but the match was overshadowed by the dismissal of Bobbie Goulding.

Goulding, stripped of the captaincy two weeks ago for disciplinary reasons, was sent off, for the second time this season, after 29 minutes for a high

tackle on the Leeds prop, Jamie Mathioli, who received treatment for almost five minutes before being taken to hospital with severe concussion.

For the second time this year, though, Saints put Goulding's dismissal behind them to record a backs-to-the-wall victory.

At the other end of the table, the bottom club Oldham were given some hope of survival with Castleford losing 22-14 at Warrington. Castleford pro-

vided the much-improved Wolves with a tough test but were always chasing the game once Jon Roper pounced for his ninth try of the season after 15 minutes.

There were also tries for Jason Lidden, Nigel Vagana and Mark Forster, while Castleford managed two late tries from Jason Critchley and Chris Smith.

Oldham, who play at Paris tonight, are three points behind both points until Michael Jackson scored an injury-time try for Halifax which was converted by John Schuster.

have just one more game to confirm their Super League place for next season. Paris are on 10 points with Castleford, but have today's match in hand.

London Broncos made sure of second place despite dropping a point in a 28-28 draw against Halifax Blue Sox at The Stoop, London, who had led 24-10, were still heading for both points until Michael Jackson scored an injury-time try for Halifax which was converted by John Schuster.

It was the American's third seniors title in five starts since he turned 20 in June. Hall, from North Carolina, returned to the professional game only four years ago after a career as an engineering salesman.

Yesterday, Hall made it four in a row in the return leg in Paris tomorrow in order to qualify for the Champions League.

GOLF

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